The use of English in Norwegian directorates

Challenges in international cooperation

Tone Fairway

Masteravhandling ved Institutt for Lærerutdanning og Skoleutvikling, Engelsk fagdidaktikk

UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

Vår 2011

2011

The use of English in Norwegian directorates – challenges in international cooperation

Tone Fairway

http://www.duo.uio.no/

Trykk: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to examine how English is used by professionals in Norwegian directorates. It is a qualitative survey following up an earlier quantitative survey conducted in the Norwegian ministries. I interviewed 13 members of staff in three different directorates, in order to find out how they use English, in which situations as well as the tasks involved. I was interested in their accounts of when they feel they succeed and make mistakes in English.

In performing this qualitative survey, carried out as semi-structured interviews, I hoped to obtain accounts of incidents and real-life stories that could help see the use of English professionally in relation to the English my respondents learnt from upper secondary education, through to higher education and in their working life. I basically wanted to see if there is reason to believe that English as a subject functions well in preparing young students for higher education and working life.

I found that my respondents claim to function quite well in English. However, as the interviews progressed, a majority of them accounted for episodes where the use of English had either caused misunderstandings, or more gravely, that they themselves or colleagues had been exposed to ridicule and linguistic power-play by native speakers of English. This occurred in international forums such as within the European Union or the United Nations.

My findings indicate that there is room for improvement, both in the way English is taught in school and how it is used in higher education, but also in the workplace, where there seems to be a lack of an overall structure or plan on how to improve and maintain the English skills of the employees.

Although my survey is a small-scale qualitative survey comprising data of only 13 respondents, the results largely coincide with the quantitative survey I am following up. This indicates that the results may be transferable to comparable groups of professionals. It would be of interest to see similar surveys conducted in all the directorates, perhaps in the form of a questionnaire.

When I started out with the work on this thesis I wanted to include the use of other foreign languages than English, however, only a few of my respondents use any other language than English, therefore this is only briefly touched upon in this thesis. However, since the field my respondents work in internationally involves a great deal of contact with organisations that use

French and German in their work, it would be most interesting to see surveys examining theses languages specifically.

In the discussion and conclusion I address areas I believe can contribute to better standards of English in the population, from teacher education and curriculum design, to higher education and attitudes in the political field as well as among employers.

Sammendrag

Målet med denne masteravhandlingen er å undersøke hvordan engelsk brukes i profesjonell sammenheng i norske direktorater. Det er en kvalitativ undersøkelse som følger opp en tidligere kvantitativ undersøkelse gjennomført i de norske departementene. Jeg intervjuet 13 ansatte i tre ulike direktorater for å finne ut hvordan de bruker engelsk, i hvilke situasjoner og i forbindelse med hvilke oppgaver de utfører. Jeg var interessert i deres beretninger om når de føler de lykkes og når de gjør feil i sin bruk av engelsk.

I gjennomføringen av denne kvalitative undersøkelsen, utført som semi-strukturerte intervjuer, håpet jeg å få beretninger fra hendelser og historier fra virkeligheten som kunne hjelpe meg til å se bruken av engelsk på profesjonelt plan i relasjon til den engelsken respondentene lærte fra videregående skole, til og med høyere utdanning og i arbeidslivet. Jeg ønsket rett og slett å se om det fantes grunn til å tro at engelsk som fag fungerer godt i å forberede unge studenter for utdanning og yrkesliv.

Jeg fant ut at respondentene mine opplever at de fungerer ganske godt i engelsk. Likevel, ettersom intervjuene skred fram, fortalte flertallet om episoder hvor bruk av engelsk enten hadde forårsaket misforståelser, eller mer alvorlig, at de selv eller kolleger hadde vært utsatt for latterliggjøring og lingvistisk maktspill fra engelskspråklige morsmålsbrukere. Disse hendelsene fant sted i ulike fora, for eksempel i Den europeiske union og De forente nasjoner.

Funnene mine indikerer at det finnes rom for forbedring, både i måten engelsk undervises på i skolen og slik det brukes i høyere utdanning, men også på arbeidsplassen, hvor det synes å være mangel på en overordnet struktur eller plan for hvordan man kan forbedre og opprettholde engelskkunnskapene hos de ansatte.

Selv om min undersøkelse er en småskala kvalitativ undersøkelse, sammensatt av data fra bare 13 respondenter, viser resultatene at de i stor grad korresponderer med den kvantitative undersøkelsen jeg gjør en oppfølging av. Dette indikerer at resultatene kan være overførbare til sammenliknbare yrkesgrupper. Det ville være interessant å se liknende undersøkelser gjennomført i alle direktoratene, muligens i form av spørreskjema.

Da jeg startet arbeidet med denne masteravhandlingen ønsket jeg å inkludere bruken av andre fremmedspråk enn engelsk, men dessverre brukte så få av mine respondenter noe annet språk enn engelsk at dette omtales i liten grad i denne avhandlingen. Likevel, siden området respondentene mine arbeider i omfatter en stor grad av kontakt med organisasjoner som bruker

fransk og tysk i sitt arbeid, ville det vært svært interessant å se undersøkelser som omhandler disse språkene spesifikt.

I diskusjonskapitlet og konklusjonen påpeker jeg områder jeg tror kan bidra til å forbedre nivået på engelsk i befolkningen, fra lærerutdanningen og læreplanarbeid, til høyere utdanning og holdninger i det politiske felt og blant arbeidsgivere.

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, Associate Professor Glenn Ole Hellekjær, for his invaluable help in the process of conducting the survey and writing this thesis. You have kept me on track, inspired me, encouraged me and have always been approachable – thank you so much!

Next, I wish to thank my respondents, without whose positive attitudes and honest reflections this thesis would not have materialised. Your professionalism and ability to reflect over issues close to home was very inspiring indeed.

I also need to thank the two head teachers I have worked for during the course of this process; Elsie Marit Urdal Sand and Eli Engløk – you have encouraged me in the process and allowed for time to write when I have needed it.

Last, I have to thank my family – the love of my life, Steven, whose support and continuous love was vital to me throughout the process. My two daughters also deserve my thanks; they have rarely complained that Mummy has taken so much time away from the family, and they look forward to my joining in on family outings and holidays again soon.

Oslo, May 2011

Tone Fairway

Contents

1 Introduction

I work as an English teacher and guidance counsellor in an upper secondary school, consequently I encounter students both as a teacher and as a professional counsellor whose job is to assist in important choices concerning their education. Ethically concerned as I am, I try not to advertise language studies to my students, neither in upper secondary school nor in higher education. However, I do explain the options and try to present a balanced picture regarding the opportunities such competence can contribute to their future careers.

Moreover, the double role I possess as an English teacher and guidance counsellor has provided me with valuable insight into the issue of language learning in school as well as language competence requirements in professional working life. Languages in general, and English in particular, are important factors adding to a professional's competence in any given field of work in our globalised world. My English students will most likely be required to perform a variety of work-related tasks in English; they will have to master different registers, from informal small talk to very formal exchanges of arguments, formal and informal written tasks encompassing everything from minutes of the meeting to reports and letters. Thus, to properly prepare themselves for their professional future young people today would perhaps be expected to devote themselves to in-depth courses in English in upper secondary school and language studies in university. Sadly, I know that this is not the case for the majority. As can be read in the statistics provided by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (Utdanningsdirektoratet)[1] , only a minority of upper secondary school students choose to take English in-depth courses (approximately 25%). This implies that the majority rely on their basic skills from the compulsory subject in the first year of upper secondary school (hereafter called Vg1) when they continue to higher education, where a lot of study literature as well as some teaching are in English. Moreover, as a result of the fact that most students do not acquire any formal education in English, they rely on their Vg1 English skills later in their working life as well.

Although many may cope well with little formal education in English, there are voices claiming that the level of English in Norway is far from high enough. Professor of Political Science at the University of Oslo, Janne Haaland Matlary, pinpoints the shortcomings of Norwegian language competence, both in the political elite and among the average Norwegian:

1 http://skoleporten.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/rapportvisning.aspx?enhetsid=00&vurderingsomrade=fed86d60-df13-45c8-a544-457b84fc8216&underomrade=777215a2-eef6-4245-951d-c2632fdd384e&skoletype=1 (Accessed 26.04.10)

> In Norway there seems to be a widespread assumption that mediocre English is good enough. It is not – a nuanced language makes you able to communicate precisely and clearly, and English is a complex language.
>
> (my translation, Matlary in Aftenposten 02.03.2010)

Another professional working with Norwegian students of English on a daily basis, Associate Professor of English at Sør-Trøndelag University College, Ingfrid Thowsen, expresses herself along the same lines as Matlary in a feature article in Adresseavisa:

> When English is to be used as more than 'tourist English', there is a greater need to be familiar with cultural conventions and norms in order to avoid misunderstandings. In other words, it is all about taking English as a subject seriously.
>
> (my translation, Thowsen in Adressa11.04.09)

With Matlary and Thowsen's words in mind, I believe it is appropriate to outline some facts and views concerning the situation of languages in European cooperation organisations, seeing as this thesis in the following chapters will concentrate around respondents from Norwegian state directorates who work internationally, particularly in Europe. Their experiences will be presented duly in the results chapter.

Europe, represented by the European Union and the Council of Europe have attempted, through policies and language programmes, to create unified language policies in education and transnational communication for decades. There is, however, some disagreement as to whether or not this has been accomplished to a substantial degree. Norway, as a member of the European Economic Area and the Council of Europe has welcomed the initiatives, especially by incorporating the Common European Framework[2] into the field of language learning and testing. This framework (hereafter called CEF) aims at providing tools to ensure that language competence is valued and assessed similarly in all parts of Europe. It describes different domains, private and professional ones, in which different tasks are performed and therefore require a variety of skills.

In the European Union it has been a goal that every European should master two other languages in addition to his/her first language, and all Member State languages are declared official, consequently debates are simultaneously interpreted and documents are translated into all languages (Phillipson 2003:112-115). As some of my respondents revealed to me in the interviews I conducted, this is not always the case: a lot of group meetings take place only in English. This

2 The framework can be accessed here: http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/?L=E&M=/documents_intro/Data_bank_descriptors.html (Accessed 01.08.10)

apparent dominance of some languages over others is described by Ulrich Bliesener:

> Some languages have always been more *official* than others. Indeed, the dominant languages – English and French, with French trailing behind English – are working languages not on the basis of any official decision but because of the development since the time when the Union was founded (Bliesener in Ahrens 2003: 78)

Bliesener maintains that the EU today has no binding language policies, only recommendations and declarations, which appear to cause imbalances and misunderstandings. The language policies of the EU will most certainly have to be assessed in the near future, as new member states are welcomed. The dilemma is this: on the one hand, the costly and complex administration of additional EU languages will lead to more bureaucracy and increased expenses; on the other hand one runs the risk of even stronger dominance of English if 'new' languages do not achieve the same official status. This particular dilemma is dealt with by Sir Paul Lever in a speech recited in *European Language Policy* (Lever in Ahrens 2003: 104-105). He contemplates the pros and cons of elevating English into an official European language, still, he sees it as the only realistic option: "But if a common language is required for European integration purposes, realistically it will have to be English" (Lever in Ahrens 2003: 107). Another organisation important in international cooperation, and along with the EU a recurring institution mentioned by my respondents as important in their work, is the United Nations. The UN has several official languages, however, the UN Secretariat uses English and French as their working language.[3] The use of languages in international and perhaps particularly European cooperation is an issue I will return to in the results chapter, where my respondents share some of their language and communication experiences.

The situation of Norwegian students both in upper secondary and tertiary education refraining from taking English (and other foreign language) courses paired with the apparent complacency expressed among others by Matlary and Thowsen stand in sharp contrast to the obvious demands articulated in the examples from the European arena of cooperation above. For me as a professional representing both the English teachers and the guidance counsellors this incoherency has made me curious as to whether or not there are any implications on the use of English in professional contexts for Norwegians. I therefore read Associate Professor Glenn Ole Hellekjær's report *Foreign Languages in Norwegian Business – English is not enough*! (Hellekjær 2007) with great interest. In his report, Hellekjær concludes that contracts are lost and that miscommunication has great implications on Norwegian businesses in general. Unfortunately, the

[3] http://www.un.org/en/aboutun/languages.shtml (Accessed 18.04.11)

public sector does not appear to be functioning in English as well as one could have hoped for either, as Hellekjær discovered when he carried out another quantitative survey in the autumn of 2008, this time in the public sector, more specifically in 17 government ministries. The report *Language power or powerlessness: The use of and need for foreign languages in Norwegian government* (Hellekjær 2010), comprises data collected from 846 respondents in 17 Norwegian ministries answering questions regarding their use of English and foreign languages in a professional capacity. In the abstract of the report Hellekjær expresses his findings like this:

> The main conclusion to be drawn from these [both his 2007 and 2010 reports], as well as earlier needs-analyses, is that language skills seem to have low priority in Norway, in education as well as in the workplace. Part of this may be due to an unmerited complacency about Norwegians' English proficiency (Hellekjær 2010: 7).

Having received access to the preliminary report in 2009 I decided to do a follow-up study of Hellekjær's survey with the intent to find whether or not I could confirm his data. I set forth to carry out the same research, this time as a qualitative study. My aim in doing so, was to obtain richer data than a large scale survey could possibly provide. In my survey I also approached a different sector of public governance, the state directorates. The directorates comprise a number of agencies all of which are governed or administered by the ministries. It is challenging to provide an exact number of directorates, seeing as some of them are transformed from inspectorates into directorates, whereas some inspectorates function as directorates, however, they are still named inspectorates. The directorates have various assignments as government agencies; they are often suppliers of services to the population in Norway and function as channels of information and expertise in their given field of work[4]. Internationally they often represent Norway in forums such as the EU, UN organisations and other transnational work including judicial, humanitarian and political areas.

1.1 Previous research in Norway

To provide such diverse services as the directorates do, they must attract well-qualified professionals in all areas of expertise. Since a lot of these people will be working internationally, it has to be assumed that their language competence plays a part in whether or not they succeed in their work. When it comes to examining the language skills of professionals in the public sector in Norway, very little, or nothing, has been done. However, there have been numerous studies of the use of foreign languages in Norwegian businesses since the early 1970s (Gundersen 2009; Hagen et

[4] http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/fad/dok/veiledninger_og_brosjyrer/1993/direktoratsboka/2.html?id=464832 (Accessed 18.04.11)

al 2006; Hellekjær 1991, 2007; Hellum & Dypedahl 1998; Kvam & Schewe 1984; Lie & Skjoldmo 1982; Norges Handelshøyskole 1973; Tveit 1997) providing information about the level of language competence in private businesses.

Apart from the 2007 survey Hellekjær conducted on Norwegian exporting and importing businesses and the 1973 large scale survey performed on former graduates from Norges Handelshøyskole (all Masters of Business and Administration), the other studies are small scale surveys concentrating on regional businesses. These studies show that businesses sometimes lose contracts due to difficulties in communicating in English and foreign languages. Although the companies claim to value language competence as important, they seem to make few efforts in order to attract candidates with language competence when hiring new staff.

As mentioned above, in the public sector little research has been carried out in this field, in fact, Hellekjær's 2010 report is the first of its kind in Norway. My findings in this thesis include material from 13 respondents in three state directorates. They all use English in their work to a degree or other, however, as I will return to, their use of other foreign languages is very limited. The respondents use English in various contexts, orally and in writing, formal and informal. Further, they account for their own educational background, their general work tasks and the area in which their directorate concentrates its work. Finally, they share their views on how language skills are addressed in their respective unit before they suggest improvements in this area that they see fit. All this material will be thoroughly presented in the results chapter.

The findings I present in this thesis to a large degree confirm the results in Hellekjær's 2010 survey – also with regard to the educational background of the respondents. An overwhelming majority of professionals rely on the skills they acquired in upper secondary school, in most cases in Vg1, to see them through a variety of work-related activities. This is an issue which must be addressed in curriculum design, educational politics and within the workplace where English is used on a regular basis. After all, Norway as a nation relies on competent English language users in order to create understanding and build relations, both in business partnerships, political cooperation, humanitarian activities and military operations.

1.2 Research statement

In our globalised world, where Norway leads a seemingly provincial existence, Norwegian government stretches far beyond our borders and work continuously in order to make sure we are still part of the international community. So, while the state directorates play an important part of governance domestically, their widespread international contacts call for sound language

competence among staff at various levels. I set forth to carry out this survey aiming to find out whether or not their competence in English is at a level where Norwegian interests are looked after in a satisfactory manner. I chose to incorporate the topic of foreign languages as well, seeing as they are important in international politics, cooperation and diplomacy. As was pinpointed by Hellekjær in his 2007 report *Foreign Language in Norwegian Business- English is not enough!*, English is often used as a lingua franca when the competence level of other foreign languages is absent (Hellekjær 2007). This is therefore an interesting aspect of language practice which I decided to include in my survey.

My research questions are as follows:

- How and when do professionals in the directorates use English?
- In which situations do they find themselves more or less confident?
- What do they see as the reasons for this sense of or lack of confidence?
- If there are shortcomings felt by the respondents, are there ways these can be improved?

The survey I have conducted is, as mentioned, a follow-up qualitative survey based on Hellekjær's quantitative, net-based survey in the Norwegian ministries (Hellekjær 2010). We both base our research on the fact that the Norwegian public sector faces international communication on a regular basis, and that various tasks therefore are performed using English or other foreign languages. There were limitations to my study, mainly due to time and scope. I chose to examine three different directorates, in order to achieve some variety in the area of responsibility, however, the sample still contains of only 13 respondents. For more reliable and valid results, one could have imagined using a triangulation method, where data is collected in different ways and processed and compared to each other. This method is described in Long's *Second Language Needs Analysis* (Long 2007). However, as time was a constraint to me as well as my respondents, I opted for semi-structured interviews. The fact that my survey is a follow-up of Hellekjær's study also helped me being able to settle for a qualitative study only. I will return to the question of reliability and validity later in this thesis, and will relate my findings to language teaching and current requirements for students in upper secondary school qualifying for higher education.

1.3 Overview of the thesis

In chapter 2 I will account for needs analyses as research methods, referring to literature and research on the topic. Furthermore, I will give some examples of needs analyses conducted in Norway and internationally.

Next, in chapter 3 I will present the method I used in this study, taking care to account for the validity and transferability of the findings. I then move on to present the directorates as well as the respondents who kindly took time out of their busy schedule to talk to me, thus providing me with the data this thesis is based on.

Subsequently, in chapter 4, I move on to present the results, and have divided the chapter into categories based on the topics as they were discussed in the semi-structured interviews. The results are followed by the discussion chapter 5, in which I attempt to tie the data collected from the respondents to the language proficiency demanded in the various forums Norwegian professionals work in. I will present the role of the curriculum and comment on its place in language learning and teaching in Norwegian schools. Next, I will discuss the statements made by my respondents and connect these with other voices and points of view in the debate about the level of English and foreign languages in Norway today. In the conclusion chapter 6 I will conclude my thesis and present implications I see as important in order to improve the level of English in professional contexts in Norway. I will also briefly tie these implications to possible further research in this field.

1.4 Key definitions

Before I move on, there are terms used in this thesis I would prefer to clarify. When I refer to students, this can be both in lower and upper secondary school as well as in tertiary education. The context will make it clear to the reader which education level I refer to in each instance. In Norwegian upper secondary school, the levels are referred to as Vg1, Vg2 and Vg3 for the first, second and third year consecutively. I will use these terms when describing each form. The national curriculum introduced in 2006 as The Knowledge Promotion will hereafter be referred to as LK06, and the previous national curriculum, Reform 94, as R94. The term foreign language is used on languages such as German and French, i.e. the languages which in Norwegian often are referred to as a 'second foreign language' (after English). I will only refer to English as 'English', thus not categorising it together with foreign languages.

This thesis presents a needs analysis carried out in the aforementioned directorates. *Needs analysis* is a term used to describe research that aims to assess the requirements a group of staff or students face, in order to address the areas where competence is lacking. It is therefore sometimes also described as *gap analysis*.[5] It is seen as a practical research tool often using a triangulation of methods such as questionnaires, interviews and observation (Nation & Macalister 2010: 26-27). The term needs analysis will sometimes be abbreviated to NA. A similar strategy referred to is Language

[5] http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/gap-analysis.html (Accessed 20.04.11)

Needs Assessment, which I will refer to as LNA. In the context of English for specific purposes, ESP is used as an abbreviation, and where I refer to other, non-identified languages for specific purposes, LSP will be used.

I refer to *syllabi* and *curricula*, instead of *syllabuses* and *curriculums*, simply because I prefer to use the Latin form in the plural, whereas I choose to use *forums* when I describe the contexts in which my respondents meet, as opposed to the Latin plural form *fora*, which I find refers more specifically to the public squares in Roman times.

2 Needs analyses

2.1 What are needs analyses?

Needs analyses in the language field comprise a variety of methods which can be conducted on individuals or groups in order to identify work tasks performed, the respondents' needs for specific skills in their area of work, or alternatively, in education. Characteristically, they focus on practical, real-life contexts and experiences rather than theoretical and research-oriented hypotheses. These practical analyses can then form the basis of organisation and content of in-house language training or revision of syllabus designs, among others.

Needs analyses may be designed and carried out as interviews, questionnaires or case studies, to mention some of the more common types. According to Richard West, language teaching needs analyses date back to the 1920s in India, where Michael West attempted to identify why and how learners should learn English (West 1997: 68). This issue of teaching 'general English' is later described by Abott as a TENOR (Teaching English for No Obvious Reason), also accounted for in the abovementioned article by Richard West (Abott as cited in West 1997: 68). However, in the 1970s a movement towards English for Specific Purposes (hereafter referred to as ESP), was particularly strongly fronted by The Council of Europe (West 1997: 68-69). The definition of ESP can be narrowed down to 'teaching of English, not as an end in itself but as an essential means to a clearly identifiable goal' (Mackay as cited in Robinson 1980: 6). The Council has since introduced its Common European Framework (hereafter referred to as CEF), categorising levels of English proficiency which are used throughout Europe in curriculum planning and learner assessment, including Norway (CEF 2001).

Consequently, needs analyses conducted in order to assess the communication needs of individuals or groups must oblige by parameters set by circumstances, both linguistic and non-linguistic, according to Munby (Munby in Robinson 1980: 29-30). He withholds the importance of acknowledging both the setting in which the language will be used, for example the social relationship involved, and the specific linguistic tasks the participants need to be able to perform (Munby in Robinson 1980: 30).

Moreover, Michael H. Long addresses the complexity of language learning in his book *Second Language Needs Analysis* (Long 2007), and although he advocates the use of needs analyses he is careful to point out that highly different needs can be expressed by different learners, who after all often represent a variety of competence levels. Consequently, a multitude of approaches

may be required in order for language users at various levels to attain the competence they lack (Long 2007: 2-3). Another point he makes, is the advantage earned by the use of several methods in needs analyses, therefore he makes sure these aspects are represented by the contributors in the aforementioned book (Long 2007: 5).

As I was searching through relevant literature for research conducted about needs analyses, I discovered that there was very little to be found. Michael Long (2007), points to this issue as well:

> While as substantial number of NAs have been reported in the literature (and many more, conducted for private businesses or for very specialized groups of learners, remain unpublished), there has been surprisingly little research, despite its obvious and growing importance, on NA itself (Long 2007: 20).

The absence of research material is puzzling and not of great help to novices like me, who attempt to operate our way through methods of work new to us. Seeing that needs analyses are frequently used in so many areas, it would be of great value to see more research conducted, both regarding the methodology used and the expected validity and reliability of them. A quick search on the Internet, both 'googling' and specifically looking through library databases reveal that there are needs analyses published in a number of different domains, from public sector service assessments to surveys in business and academia. This is clearly a research form which comes across as versatile and adaptable to many branches, which makes it all the more relevant to ask why so little research has dealt with the method, as Long points out.

2.2 Examples of international needs analyses

In the aforementioned book *Second Language Needs Analysis,* John A. Lett (Lett in Long 2007), describes Language Needs Assessment (hereafter referred to as LNA) as frequently used by the United States military:

> An LNA is performed by drawing together a group of individuals representing both the career field(s) in question and the language proficiency level guidelines. These individuals discuss the job tasks whose performance involves the use of the foreign language in any way [..] This information is then utilized by decision-makers to establish or revise official politics with regard to requirements for foreign language job performance and foreign language education for the career field(s) in question (Lett in Long 2007: 110).

According to Lett there is a systematic approach in the form of LNA in the US military conducted in order to meet the needs of language competence with the appropriate measures. This

comes across as a fairly straightforward procedure, organised methodically as described in the quote above. Lett goes on to conclude:

> Language needs assessments as described herein have provided an essential foundation for the development of language policy in various career fields of the US military. As they have been conducted with different groups of personnel over the past two decades, procedures have evolved and insights have grown into how best to conduct them (Lett in Long 2007: 122).

What Lett describes as LNA, functions as a form of analysis which contributes to systematically improving the skills of the staff and therefore hopefully their job performance as well. Safe to say, the US military involved in operations around the world face a number of challenges regarding language and communication every day.

Another relevant aspect of language and communication I am concerned with, is the cultural dimension. However, Lett's article does not mention this at all. It would certainly have been illuminating to find out how the US military incorporate cultural awareness in their work to improve language competence. Considering the operations the US military have been involved in around the world since 11 September 2001, it is most certainly an issue in their language training programmes. This is a topic which would have been relevant to look at further in-depth, however, the issue of cultural awareness in communication will be dealt with in the results and discussion chapters.

A completely different group of professionals were subjected to a needs analysis examined by Rebeca Jasso-Aguilar, another study described in Long's book (Jasso-Aguilar in Long 2007). She conducted a study of Waikiki hotel maids, comprising of unstructured interviews, questionnaires and participant observation. This method is also known as triangulation (Jasso-Aguilar in Long 2007: 128). Jasso-Aguilar uses this method in order to be able to verify her findings, which is especially useful in this context where the respondents represent a wide spectrum concerning English proficiency and cultural backgrounds. She reports that the triangulation method and specifically the observer role were particularly useful, seeing as they enabled her to identify the most reliable sources as well as gave her an insight as to which situations the respondents used English (Jasso-Aguilar in Long 2007: 149).

2.3 Examples of needs analyses in Norway

In Norway needs analyses have been conducted in order to assess the situation for the use of languages, particularly in private enterprises. The aforementioned survey by Hellekjær: *Foreign Languages in Norwegian Business – English is not enough! (*Hellekjær 2007) assesses some of the problems facing enterprises as they do business outside Scandinavia. He uncovers the fact that most of the staff rely on their education from upper secondary school with regard to English, furthermore, he reveals the fact that one tends to make do with English in situations where it would be far more beneficial to use another language, such as German or French (Hellekjær 2007: 27-28).

Earlier studies include Ulf Lie and Sissel Skjoldmo's *Behovet for fremmedspråk i næringslivet* (The need of foreign languages in business) from 1982. This was conducted as a large scale survey in the form of a questionnaire. The aim of this survey was to identify the course needs of different respondents in private businesses according to their position and tasks. In their conclusion Lie and Skjoldmo state that both businesses and schools could benefit from the information revealed in the survey (Lie & Skjoldmo 1982: 30), however, concluding whether this has taken place or not is impossible for me to say.

A similar study was conducted in Østfold County in 1998 by Bjørg Hellum and Magne Dypedahl called *Business Communication and Cultural Awareness in Norwegian Companies.* As the researchers express it in the abstract: "Their aim was to investigate the use of foreign languages and the level of cultural awareness in Østfold companies, and furthermore, to review the companies' needs for training strategies" (Hellum & Dypedahl 1998: 2). I will return to some of their findings later in my thesis.

Several other language needs analyses have been conducted in Norway during the last decades, all with the intention of opening up for or creating awareness around the constant issue of competence building in languages. A survey done by Den filologiske faggruppe (The philologic society) at Norges Handelshøyskole (Norwegian School of Business, hereafter referred to as NHH) as early as in 1973, examined candidates with a Master's degree of Business and Administration and their use of languages, English and foreign alike (NHH 1973). The main concern of NHH was that the number of students taking languages as an additional course to business studies at the college had declined dramatically after it became an elective.

Another survey which may be mentioned in this context, is one conducted by Østfold distriktshøyskole (Østfold College, hereafter called ØDH) in 1984, called *Tyskkunnskaper i norsk*

næringsliv – en analyse om behov og etterspørsel (German competence in Norwegian businesses – an analysis of supply and demand). This, again, was a large scale survey consisting of a questionnaire which was distributed to businesses which had advertised for staff that were proficient in German. The survey uncovered that the needs of these businesses varied according to the tasks performed (ØDH 1984), which is hardly surprising considering the range of companies taking part in the survey.

A last survey which must be mentioned again, is Associate Professor at the University of Oslo, Glenn Ole Hellekjær's *Language power or powerlessness: The use of and need for foreign languages in Norwegian government* (Hellekjær 2010). This survey provides the foundation on which I have constructed my survey, thus this thesis is a follow-up in the form of a qualitative approach to the same topic and in a similar area. In that respect, the fact that my survey is a qualitative one whereas Hellekjær's was a net-based questionnaire, contributes to providing varied methods in our needs analyses, as supported by many researchers, among others Richard West (West 1997:72-73). I will go further in-depth on Hellekjær's survey in the method chapter in addition to showing comparisons between some of my findings and his in the discussion chapter.

Out of all the examples mentioned, Hellekjær's is the only needs analysis on languages I have been able to find which takes on the task of examining the public sector (Hellekjær 2010). With the size of the Norwegian public sector in mind there is surprisingly little emphasis on this issue in the public domain. Norwegian international contact and activity certainly indicate that a lot of work takes place using other languages than Norwegian. This will of course be the focus of my thesis and therefore examined from various points of view at a later stage.

The needs analysis I have carried out is, as aforementioned, a qualitative study in which I conducted semi-structured interviews with 13 respondents from three different directorates. The following four topics were covered in the interviews:

- Background and qualifications
- The use of English in the work
- Specific examples of situations where the use of English or foreign languages either work successfully or fail
- The quality control of the work performed in English or foreign language and course offers or possible course needs.

As can be seen from the topics listed above, they provide the crucial areas which need to be covered in order to identify what qualifications the respondents have with regard to languages, the

practical situations in which they make use of English and their expressed needs for competence-building in English. The more implicit needs which may be interpreted out of the respondents' descriptions of real-life situations, are also an advantage which using a semi-structured interview opens up for.

Long strongly recommends using more than one method when working in this field: "It is difficult to overemphasize the likelihood that use of *multiple measures,* as well as multiple sources will increase the quality of information gathered" (Long 2007: 32). West expresses himself similarly in his article *Needs Analysis: State of the Art*: "What is important is that, wherever possible, several methods should be used in order to obtain a complete and accurate picture" (West 1997: 72). I believe that conducting a follow-up study of Hellekjær's, as I am doing with this needs analysis, contributes to the trustworthiness of both our studies, precisely because we have used the same focus areas in our questionnaire and interview guide, however, we have accessed different methods and used different samples; nevertheless, our respondents work in a similar area with regard to responsibility and international contact, and therefore share some of the same challenges. The comparison of the results of the two surveys will be thoroughly discussed in the discussion chapter.

2.4 Chapter summary

I began this chapter by accounting for the phenomenon of needs analyses and their role as user-oriented rather than theoretically based research methods. Referring to Michael Long, I went on to explain that not a lot of research has been done on them as methodological research tools. To illustrate the versatility of methods they often include, I then described how they can be performed using a variety of methods such as interviews, questionnaires and case studies. Moreover, I pursued to refer to John A. Lett, who describes the use of LNA in the US military, stating that it has improved their work in the field of language competence. Then I moved on to another example, Jasso-Aguilar's triangular survey examining the use of English by Waikiki hotel maids. Further, I gave examples of needs analyses concerned with the use of English and foreign languages conducted in Norway, and made a point of underlining that most of them were rather dated and that only one of them, Hellekjær's survey *Language power or powerlessness: The use of and need for foreign languages in Norwegian government* (Hellekjær 2010), examined the public sector.

3 Method

3.1 The qualitative approach

In this chapter I will account for my decision to use a qualitative approach in this survey. Moreover, I will briefly describe how I approached the task of constructing a semi-structured interview guide based on areas I was interested in exploring. I will then account for the procedure I used in finding directorates where I was put in contact with the respondents who agreed to be interviewed. Finally, I will briefly present the directorates before I introduce the respondents, their educational background as well as the most frequent work tasks involving the use of English.

As referred to earlier, the needs analysis which this study follows up, *Language power or powerlessness: The use of and need for foreign languages in Norwegian government* (Hellekjær 2010), was a quantitative study based on a questionnaire sent out to a sample of staff at the Norwegian ministries. In the present needs analysis, my goal is to examine how the results Hellekjær found in his quantitative survey correspond with my limited, qualitative sample. I am particularly interested in the expansion and elaboration that this small-scale survey allows for. In order to obtain the richer information than a quantitative study could possibly provide, I decided to carry out semi-structured interviews to collect the necessary data. In my search for a suitable group of professionals who could easily be compared to Hellekjær's respondents, I turned towards a different set of institutions in the Norwegian public administration; the directorates. As mentioned above, I opted for semi-structured interviews – primarily because they would provide more detailed information, spontaneous comments and contributions compared to what the data from a survey would open up for.

In *Second Language Needs Analysis* Long describes the role of interviews in language needs analysis as follows:

> One of the more direct ways of finding out what people think or do (in some cultures, at least) is to ask them, a function served by various kinds of interviews and questionnaires. The interview is a key data-gathering tool in many branches of the social sciences, most notably in anthropology and linguistics field work (Long 2007: 35).

However, the qualitative approach, for all its rich data, confronts the researcher with a number of challenges, as described in Robson's *Real World Research*: "Qualitative data have been described as 'attractive nuisance'" (Miles as cited in Robson 2002: 455). By this, Miles argues that this type of data is captivating and interesting; however, it is at the same time inconvenient in the

way that it has to be interpreted and treated with objectivity in a totally different way to quantitative data. Robson pinpoints the challenges faced by the qualitative researcher, who is presented with 'rich', 'full' and 'real' words, as opposed to 'dry' numbers found in quantitative research material. Qualitative analysis carried out as interviews involves accumulating a variety of rich, full and real words. The researcher, in turn, faces the challenge of processing and interpreting the data. Both in the data collection process and in the analysis, obstacles may appear. The amount of information one collects needs to be manageable, also in the analysis. These are issues I have been constantly aware of throughout the process, consciously trying to balance the work in the most truthful way I possibly can. Atkinson et al. present their views on the use of interviews as a method like this:

> They can be analyzed as matters of languages and culture. We do not need, therefore, to treat the interview as a biographically unique event, concerned with private meanings and unique biographies. We can approach it with clear analytic intent, and with genuinely sociological or anthropological commitments (Atkinson et al 2003: 123).

Consequently, each interview must be seen in the context of the rest, as the researcher looks for expressed views that can be systemised with regard to the questions asked and the answers given by the other interviewees.

3.1.1 The interview guide

Drawing upon Hellekjær (2010), I outlined four focus areas around which I constructed a semi-structured interview guide. These areas were: 1) *Background and qualifications*, 2) *Use of English in the work*, 3) *Specific examples of situations where the use of English or foreign languages either work successfully or fail*, and lastly, 4) *The quality control of the work performed in English or foreign language and course offers or possible course needs.* The interview guide contained questions and follow-up questions, which were included in case I needed to elaborate or go in-depth on any particular issue. The full interview guide can be found in the appendix of this thesis. Even though I had prepared follow-up questions, I found that the majority of the interviews were conducted as structured conversations within the basic framework outlined in the four areas I set out to cover. This meant that the follow-up questions turned out to be superfluous in most instances.

As mentioned above, the professionals I interviewed were to a large degree able and willing to speak freely around the four topics I introduced them to. In some cases I was obliged to probe and prompt (Robson 2002: 276) in order to achieve comments and answers according to the interview guide. In hindsight I have contemplated whether I should have sent the interview

questions to the respondents in advance in order to prepare them beforehand. However, this did not pose a problem, as all respondents commented on, and gave answers to questions in all four areas of the interview. I had prepared the candidates for the topic we were to talk about in the interview, either personally over the phone or via e-mail, or through the information I gave the personnel managers who put me in contact with the interviewees. As a final supporting element to my approach, I would like to emphasise that none of the interviewees indicated that they would have preferred to be briefed on the topic in more detail prior to the interview. My impression was that it was a topic they could easily relate to and talk about in the setting in which we met.

3.2 Procedure

I contacted possible interviewees in the following manner: I called up the directorates and asked to speak to a personnel manager or someone from personnel department. I managed to make contact with one manager who was able to provide me with candidates from different departments in one incident. In the other two I made sure to approach two different departments within the same directorate. This way I succeeded in finding interviewees from a selection of departments, working at different levels within a range of areas.

The interviews took place face to face in the office of the respondents between December 2009 and February 2010. Each of the interviews was conducted in Norwegian, seeing as I aimed to provide as comfortable and natural a setting for the respondents as possible. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes, although some took longer due to the respondents' detailed input. They were all audio-taped and transcribed by me. Material quoted in this thesis has been translated into English by me. As mentioned, the interview questions were divided into four sections, covering *1) Background and qualifications, 2) The use of English and other languages in work situations, 3) Specific incidents of success or failure involving the use of English or a foreign language*, and finally, *4) The quality control procedures and course offers or needs in the work place.* The appendix provides a full interview guide.

I interviewed 13 professionals, ranging from the age of 31 to 64, who all work in three different directorates. These three directorates will be briefly presented in order to provide an idea as to their area of responsibility later in this chapter, without disclosing their specific field of work. I have also anonymised both the respondents and the directorates to protect my sources. The respondents will therefore be referred to by fictitious first names only, and the directorates by letters A, B and C. In two directorates I interviewed four respondents, and in the third one I interviewed five. This uneven distribution will be accounted for later in this chapter. I consciously strove to find

respondents both from management and adviser level. Four of the respondents were in director or managerial positions whereas nine represented the adviser or senior adviser level. Concerning the distribution of male versus female respondents I did not make requests when I approached the directorates for candidates. However, I monitored the distribution of candidates closely and would have made specific requests had I ended up with a particularly uneven distribution between the sexes. As it turned out I ended up interviewing six men and seven women.

3.3 Sample

I approached several directorates with the intention of finding three government bodies representing a variety regarding field of work, on the one hand directorates concentrating their work in Norway and on the other those who work internationally. This, I hoped, would lead me to interviewees describing a variety of work areas and responsibilities, something I found important as I was only aiming to interview around 12 respondents. However, the process of finding directorates in which I could make contact with interviewees became a little less straightforward than I had initially hoped for. I was bound by a time limit seeing as I was working full time throughout the period of this thesis, therefore I moved on to other directorates when I realised that a couple of the first ones I had approached were unable to put me in contact with relevant respondents right away.

After a while I was lucky to make contact with a personnel manager in one directorate who helped me find respondents willing to be interviewed. In the other two I was put in contact with people in different departments who accepted my request for an interview. The selection of respondents is as varied as possible in such a limited sample, in that they represent three different directorates and different departments as well as different levels of responsibilities within their departments. All in all I would therefore say that the selection provides a diverse group of respondents, regarding field of work and use of English. Above all, the respondents I interviewed in the end were extraordinarily positive and welcoming, and I could not have asked for more interesting people to talk to!

An issue which concerned me initially was the possibility that I would be put in contact with the 'experts on English' in the directorates. I wanted this survey to be as truthful to the working life of the directorates in Norway as possible, therefore I made a point of asking to be put in contact with people who use English and/or foreign languages in their work, but stressed that I did not aim at respondents who were considered the English or foreign language experts of their respective departments. I also underlined the importance of this to the mediators, so they would not simply supply the best and most active users of English and foreign languages. After all, my aim in

carrying out the research was to find a varied selection of respondents using English and/or foreign languages.

Nevertheless, having analysed the material I am left with a group of respondents who all use English to a certain degree in their professional capacity, and I acknowledge that this may be seen as a slightly one-sided group. The reason for this, as I see it, is that the respondents all have some form of higher education and their jobs are at adviser level or higher. If I had interviewed respondents in clerical positions for instance, I might have found that their education was mainly from a vocational level. The responsibilities and work areas of these might not reflect the same frequency in the use of English as the staff in higher positions; however, this is not something I have examined closely. If I were to ensure a varied selection of respondents I should perhaps have asked for data describing the education level of the staff in the respective directorates. As it stands, my group of respondents represents highly educated professionals, which I will account for later in the method chapter. It is worth noting that an equally high level of education among the respondents was found in *Language power or powerlessness: The use of and need for foreign languages in Norwegian government* (Hellekjær 2010). Almost 95% of his respondents had more than four years of higher education, whereas nearly 85% of my respondents fall in the same category. However, 81% of my respondents only had upper-secondary school English.

3.4 Validity and transferability

Conducting interviews on such a small scale as I have done in this thesis can provide information and insight into the working lives of the respondents. It may even show trends and corresponding answers to a great degree. However, these results are obtained from a limited sample of individuals and can under no circumstances be used in any other way than as examples of professionals reflecting on the use of language in their respective organisation.

Having embarked on the task of carrying through and analysing qualitative research, I needed to consider how to approach the task of the interviews with a professional attitude. Robson points out a few essential aspects of the interview which the interviewer needs to be aware of and take into consideration:

> Is the script being kept to? Are standard questions being asked in the same way to all interviewees? Are the 'skips' depending on particular answers carried out correctly? Are all interviewees responded to in the same way? [..] The less the degree of structure in the interview, the more complex the performance required from the interviewer (Robson 2002: 290).

The challenge for me was to construct an interview guide where there would be enough relevant questions in all areas of interests, but also possibilities of skipping questions and elaborating on others, all depending on the input from the interviewee. I considered the pitfalls mentioned by Robson, and tried to carry his recommendations with me into the interview situations. After the acid test of the pilot interview I did an evaluation together with my first interviewee, in which I asked for feedback from her concerning my behaviour and role as an interviewer. It is worth mentioning that this pilot interview is included in the survey, as one of the 13 respondents. The pilot interviewee was very satisfied with the interview, as was I, and the only element of change to the final interview guide was the addition of the question of guidelines for the use of English. This, however, I will return to in the results chapter.

The way the interviews are analysed and the material interpreted depend, to a large extent, on the integrity of the analyst and interviewer. I was aware of this all through the process, and attempted to stay as objective as possible in the setting and analysis of the interviews. The challenge is expressed by Alasdair MacIntyre in Kvale and Brinkmann's book *Det kvalitative forskningsintervju* (*The qualitative research interview),* MacIntyre (as cited in Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 247): "Objectivity is a moral term before it is a methodological term, and the activities of natural sciences turn out to be a form of moral activity" (my translation). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009: 247) also define objectivity as freedom from one-sidedness, a goal I find very important to work towards in this context.

As aforementioned, the interviews were taped on a digital recorder, thus could easily be transferred to my computer as sound files. These sound files I listened to over and over again and transcribed, with the intent of categorising the information linked to the four topic areas defined earlier. This was crucial in order to be able to organise and compare and contrast my findings. In the results chapter I will present the impressions I am left with after having processed the interview material, in addition, a number of quotes which particularly illustrate these impressions are included.

I find that the results from the interviews show that the respondents to a great degree expressed similar views on the topics dealt with. Moreover, many of them shared similar experiences in their use of English as a work language, regardless of which directorate they work in. The results I have obtained in my survey also largely coincide with Hellekjær's in *Language power or powerlessness: The use of and need for foreign languages in Norwegian government* (Hellekjær 2010), both in the situations the respondents described using English in and obstacles and challenges they have encountered. This is of great importance, and strengthens the validity and reliability of my study, which as mentioned above otherwise could only be claimed to express the

views and experiences of a few individuals. The question of transferability comes in here as well, and again I have to stress that the coinciding results Hellekjær and I have suggest a certain transferability; between professionals in state directorates and government ministries, who share a similar level of high education. The type of transferability found in qualitative research that I claim is described and discussed in *Det kvalitative forskningsintervju* (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 264-267).

I strove to stay objective throughout the process, as described by Kvale and Brinkmann as the ability to stay free of prejudices whilst producing knowledge which is systematically controlled and verified. It is the avoidance of being one-sided which ensures objectivity (MacIntyre as cited in Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 247). I consider this essential in my study and have worked in order to achieve as objective a perspective as possible, during the process from designing the interview guide through to analysing and presenting the material.

3.5 The respondents

In the following section I will attempt to give a brief introduction to each of the respondents, following the directorate each of them works in. As mentioned, I have chosen to keep the names of the represented directorates anonymous for the sake of my respondents, who might otherwise be easily identifiable. Furthermore, the respondents are referred to by fictitious first names only. Accordingly, for the sake of my informants and their anonymity I have decided to name the directorates A, B and C, and introduce them briefly as to what area of responsibility they work in. A more detailed overview of the respondents, their background and areas of work can be found in the appendix of this thesis in the form of a table. In this chapter I include a simplified version of this overview, to provide the basic information about each respondent.

3.5.1 Directorate A

Directorate A mainly performs services and duties within Norwegian society. Its main areas of work involve implementing official policies, guiding, monitoring and administering matters within its field of responsibility. These tasks are mainly performed in Norway, although the issues dealt with know no borders. This suggests that international cooperation is vital to their work as well. According to my informants European law has influenced the directorate's mandate to a significantly greater degree since Norway joined the European Economic Area in 1992. This has had great impact on the use of English in particular, which I will return to below.

My first respondent at Directorate A, Mads, is 56 years old. He has a Master's degree in Technology (Physics) and a year of Environmental Studies, all obtained in Norway. Mads has worked in Norway his entire career, and has been in his current senior adviser position for the last 9 years. He explains that his work to a large extent is focused internationally, as he represents Norway through his position in directorate A in the United Nations and the European Commission. His role in the EU Commission is as a national expert, preparing comments and input on EU directives. The mandate of these experts involves creating a professionally founded basis for the directives before they are politically enforced. Mads is also the Norwegian delegation leader in an important UN forum. As mentioned above, Mads's work is, and has always been, based in Norway. However, the current position he holds involves a considerable amount of travelling and professional contact outside Norway.

The respondent Frank, also representing Directorate A, is a 33 year-old adviser who has had his current position for 4 years. He has a Master's degree in Technology (Chemistry) from a Norwegian university, and like Mads he has never studied or worked abroad. Frank's work is to a greater degree than Mads's aimed at the domestic sector, but he also takes part in EU Commission work on a regular basis. His role in the meetings he attends is as national expert. In addition, Frank takes part in transnational group work on a UN convention.

Moving on to informant Stine, she is a 59 year-old senior adviser who has worked in Directorate A for 24 years. She has a background as Cand.Real. with the subjects Nutrition, Biology and Plant Physiology from a Norwegian university. She works specifically on coordinating rules and regulations in Norway with EU regulations. In this context she spent 12 months in Brussels two years ago, where she functioned as a national expert for Norway. This arrangement is described by Stine as a formalised relation between the expert's employer (here represented by Directorate A) and the EU Commission. Her Norwegian employer pays her salary and expenses during the stay. The structure is set up between the European Economic Area and the European Commission. However, the national expert must remain loyal towards the EU Commission during their stay. A work placement like this can last anything between one to four years, and in Stine's case it involved a one-year commitment.

The next interviewee from Directorate A was Frida, a 55 year-old senior adviser with a Master's degree in Technology (Chemistry), also from Norway. She has not lived or worked abroad, apart from a stay she had in Sweden. Frida has worked in directorate A for 24 years. Of the four respondents in Directorate A, she comes across as the person who makes the least use of English in her job. Nevertheless, she too explains that she uses English on a regular basis, both in reading, writing and speaking. This will be dealt with in further detail in my results chapter.

Interviewee number five from Directorate A was introduced to me as a 'bonus respondent' after I had interviewed the other respondents in the directorate. One of the other respondents had obviously mentioned to her superior that I was in the building doing interviews on the topic of English in the work situation. This led to Ove, as I choose to call him, approaching me and volunteering to be interviewed. I took the opportunity there and then. My initial worry was of course that this eager candidate might have come forward due to a political agenda of some form or other, and that his input might therefore be particularly biased compared to the other respondents. After having gone through the interview in a most critical manner I cannot find grounds for not using it. It may be noted that Ove's eagerness can be explained by his brief career as a teacher in Norwegian upper secondary school. This aspect of his past will be dealt with in the analysis of the sub sections of the interview design later.

Ove is 48 years old and holds a position as head of section, which he has done for five years. In total he has worked in the directorate for 15 years. Ove has a Master's degree in Technology (Chemistry) from a German university. In addition he has teacher's education from a university in Norway (PPU)[6]. His position in Directorate A involves personnel management for 15 people working on the national arena, as well as a considerable degree of international contact, mainly consisting of meetings with the EU Commission in Brussels. Because of his command of German, Ove is inclined to use that as well as English in relevant situations.

3.5.2 Directorate B

Directorate B is different from A in that its area of work is almost exclusively outside Norway. Its mandate is one of international obligation which Norway has accept of and means working in various parts of the world in cooperation with national and international organisations as well as the local authorities. It administers public funds in close cooperation with national and international organisations which specialise in this area of work. As a consequence of the public funds involved, the directorate also functions as a monitor of the organisations involved and of the Norwegian funds spent by these.

The first respondent from Directorate B was Eli, a 64 year-old senior adviser. Her education comprised a Cand.Mag. degree with the subjects French, Political Science and Public Law from a Norwegian university. She has worked in Directorate B since 1972, in other words for 38 years. During her career in Directorate B Eli has worked abroad in two separate periods, from 1980-1983 and from 1998-2001. Both times were in African countries using English as work language. Eli's

[6] Praktisk-pedagogisk utdanning (Practical Pedagogic Education – educating university graduates to become teachers)

work consists of assessing various projects, attending meetings and conferences, and putting together transnational and multi- organisational teams working on specific issues. She also hires external consultants for the directorate.

The next respondent is Trude. She is 55 years old, and works in Directorate B as an adviser. Trude has worked in the organisation for one year this time around. Ten years ago she worked in the same directorate for a two-year period. Her educational background is as Cand.Pol., a degree involving both Political Science and Social Anthropology from a Norwegian university. She too has had two longer stays abroad, both times in the same African country. One was for three years as a student doing field research and working for the Norwegian People's Aid in the late 1980s, another for four years from 1991-95, while working for the Swedish International Cooperation Agency. Her work in the directorate consists of assessing documents, attending meetings and conferences, contact with the ministry in charge of the directorate and Norwegian embassies abroad.

Moving on to Elisabeth, she is a 56 year-old department head who has worked in Directorate B for three years. Her educational background is limited to one year of History from a Norwegian university and one year as an apprentice journalist. She has, however, spent six years abroad as a correspondent for two different media corporations in two American cities. In her current position she is the leader of a group of 17 people, and her work tasks include planning and arranging various activities, events and campaigns.

The last respondent in Directorate B is Anna, a 43 year-old senior adviser who has worked in the directorate for five years. She has a Cand. Jur. degree from a Norwegian university. In addition she has studied journalism in Great Britain for one year. Anna has also worked two years abroad for The Norwegian Refugee Council in the Balkans in the 1990s, where the work language was English. The work in her current position involves quality control on the law issues of international agreements and treaties Norway is involved in. These are treaties and agreements on behalf of the directorate itself, as well as the responsible ministry and respective embassies abroad. In addition Anna deals with public law issues affecting the directorate.

3.5.3 Directorate C

The last directorate I visited, Directorate C, performs most of its work mainly in Norway. It is responsible for guidelines, regulations and the implementation of services essential to the Norwegian public. The areas of responsibility are varied, which is expressed in the fact that its work is linked to several ministries, one of which is in charge of it. The areas this directorate covers are vast, and the services it monitors are diverse, affecting the majority of the population in one way or

another.

Vilde is a 57 year-old department head whose education consists of a Bachelor's degree in Physiotherapy from a Norwegian college. She has worked in the directorate for seven years, increasingly internationally during the past six. She has not had any work or study experience from abroad. Vilde describes her work as aimed at the domestic as well as the international field. Internationally she participates in an organisation within the UN, submitting suggestions and comments, all in English. Vilde also takes part in Nordic cooperation work, where as a gesture to the Finns, everything takes place in English.

The next respondent from Directorate C was Stein, a 41 year-old senior adviser. His formal education consists of a Bachelor's degree in Economy and a degree in Public Administration from college, both in Norway. In addition he has further training within the field of public services he works. Stein does not use English on a day-to-day basis, but mentions that English is used primarily when the directorate welcomes foreign delegations and when he attends conferences. Stein's work mostly involves supervising public services in the municipalities of Norway.

Arne is another respondent from Directorate C, he is 31 and holds the title chief consultant. He has been in the job for six months and works primarily towards the international area, particularly with a UN organisation. Arne's formal training consists of a Bachelor's degree in Development Studies from a college in Norway, in which a study period of six months in Cairo was included. It can be noted that the courses he followed whilst in Cairo were all in English. He has since also studied International Politics and Security for one year at a British university. Arne uses English on a day-to-day basis, both in reading, writing and speaking. His job involves preparing, arranging and participating in international meetings, as well as commenting and advising his superior in matters of international interest.

The last of the interviewees was Truls, a 59 year-old director, who has had this position in Directorate C for four years. He has an educational background as Cand.Polit, from a Norwegian university. He spent some of his student days in the UK as a guest student, where he studied English and British Medieval History as part of his degree. It should be mentioned that he is part British, and thus bilingual. Truls is responsible for organisational development within the directorate, which means that he is not responsible for one department in particular. He gives lectures, both for Norwegian and foreign visitors and is responsible for tasks involving studies and analyses in the directorate.

3.5.4 Background and qualifications

To sum up, as can be seen from the educational background of the respondents they are almost without exception well educated. As previously mentioned, this corresponds well with Hellekjær's respondents in the government ministries (Hellekjær 2010). All apart from Elisabeth have as a minimum a Bachelor's degree. In fact, eight out of the thirteen have a Master's degree. The remaining respondents' qualifications can be summed up like this: Vilde has a Bachelor's degree, Eli has a Cand.Mag., whereas Stein and Arne have Bachelor's degrees and additional university level courses.

Since my interest in them was primarily in the field of language I probed into their past and their upper secondary education. Speaking with people from the age of 31 to 64 involved great variation in the type of upper secondary education they would have attended, from *realskole* and *gymnas*, through to *reformgymnas* and finally to *videregående skole* in the mid1990s. The courses in English offered throughout these different periods vary both in number of weekly lessons and content. However, all of the respondents have as a minimum had a one-year English course in upper secondary school. As can be seen in the table provided in this chapter, some of them have had English for more than one year. Some of the respondents fail to remember exactly how many years of English they had in upper secondary school. None of the respondents had studied English as a subject in university, but three of them had studied in English abroad. All this information is provided in table 1 below.

Table 1: Description of the respondents

Respondents	Examples of work tasks in English
Mads (Directorate A) 56, Senior Adviser • Master's degree in Technology • One year of Environmental Studies • Little English in upper secondary	• UN / EU-related forums. Meetings (participates in debates, presents Norway's views) • Conferences (presentations)
Ove (Directorate A) 48, Head of Section • Master's degree in Chemistry (Germany) • PPU • English all years of upper secondary	• Meetings in EU-related forums (participates in debates, presents Norway's views) • Writes documents (regulations)
Frank (Directorate A) 33, Adviser • Master's degree in Technology • Little English in upper secondary	• Answers questions by mail and telephone • Meetings in EU-related forums (participates in debates, presents Norway's views)
Stine (Directorate A) 59 Senior Adviser • Cand.Real. • Little English in upper secondary	• Meetings in EU and UN forums (participates in debates, presents Norway's views) • Coordinates regulations (on all levels from national to global)
Frida (Directorate A) 55, Senior Adviser • Master's degree in Technology • Little English in upper secondary	• E-mails, phone calls • Seminars and conferences • Meetings in EU forums • Has held the occasional presentation in English
Anna (Directorate B) 43, Senior Adviser • Master's degree in Law • One year of Journalist College (England) • English only the first year of upper secondary	• Dialogue with embassies • E-mails, phone calls • Nearly all written work is done in English (comments on contracts, formal letters)
Elisabeth (Directorate B) 56, Director • One year of History in	• Phone calls

university • One year Journalist apprenticeship • English only the first year of upper secondary	• Reads documents • Leads debates, conferences and campaigns
Trude (Directorate B) 55, Adviser • Cand.Polit. • English all years of upper secondary	• Reviews documents • Trips abroad (supervises/reviews projects) • Reads documents • Writes documents • Meetings in international forums
Eli (Directorate B) 64, Senior Adviser • Cand.Mag. (French, Political Science, Public Law) • English all years of upper secondary	• Reviews projects • Hires consultants • Meetings in international forums • Writes documents • Reads documents
Truls (Directorate C) 59, Director • Cand.Polit. (part of the degree in Britain) • English all years of upper secondary	• Gives lectures • Leads discussion groups • Attends conferences • Reads documents • Writes documents
Arne (Directorate C) 31, Chief Consultant • Bachelor's degree n Development Studies • One year of International Politics in British university • English all years of upper secondary	• Meetings in UN forums and with other international organisations • Study visits • E-mails and phone calls • Writes documents and formal letters
Stein (Directorate C) 41, Senior Adviser • Bachelor's degree in Economics and degree in Public Administration • English only one year in upper secondary	• Attends conferences • International meetings • Welcomes foreign delegations to Norway • E-mails
Vilde (Directorate C) 57, Director • Bachelor's degree in Physiotherapy • English all years of upper secondary	• Attends conferences • Gives lectures • International UN- related cooperation meetings • Reads and writes documents

To sum up: All of the respondents had English in upper secondary school, however, only four out of the thirteen had in-depth English courses over the whole three year period. The rest had limited courses lasting one to two years. With regard to higher education, as aforementioned, all of the respondents but one has the equivalent of a Bachelor's degree or more. In fact, 11 out of the 13 had a higher education comprising of more than four years. Interestingly enough, none of the respondents had done a complete degree in an English-speaking country. The only respondent who had done a complete degree abroad was Ove, who had his Master's degree in Chemistry from Germany. The other interviewees who had studied abroad were Anna, Truls and Stein – all of them had studied one year in England.

The interviews I conducted revealed to me that very few of the respondents use other languages than English as a work language (apart from Norwegian, that is), so my intention of also investigating the use of other languages than English which I aimed at including in the thesis proved slightly challenging. Nevertheless, the fact that very few of the informants explained that they used other foreign languages does not automatically imply that there is little or no need for such competence in any of the directorates in question. This, however, I will deal with later in the thesis.

3.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have accounted for the qualitative method I have used in my research, and explained that I did so in order to attain more in-depth results than I could hope for using a quantitative survey. Further, I accounted for having chosen to conduct my survey in a selection of directorates, as well as outlining how the procedure in finding directorates and respondents took shape. I took care to consider the limited sample of 13 respondents I interviewed, stressing that such a limited sample on its own cannot provide material which may be generalised. Nevertheless, seeing as this survey is a follow-up on Hellekjær's large scale study (Hellekjær 2010), I argued that our results correspond to a large degree.

I went on to describe the four areas I set out to cover in the interviews, and how my aim was to be able to accommodate for free conversation within these four topics. Following this I gave a brief account of the pilot interview, which also included an assessment together with my pilot interviewee. I contemplated that my respondents could be a one-sided group considering the use of English because of their education level, but concluded with the fact that the staff in these

directorates are all likely to use English to a certain degree, at least those at the adviser level or above. Next, I discussed the importance of objectivity in the analysis of the material, and that this is something I strive to live up to in this work. In that context I also accounted for the validity and transferability which can be expected from a survey like this, again referring to the likes of Robson (2002), MacIntyre in Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) and Atkinson et al. (2003).

I continued to briefly present the different directorates and their role in Norwegian society. After describing each directorate I presented the respondents and their background and areas of responsibility. Finally, I summed up the background and qualifications of my respondents towards the end of the chapter, in the hope that it would clarify the previous introduction of them. I particularly took care to describe their education, also with regard to English, as it had been a vital part of the interview.

In the following results chapter I will present my findings from the interviews I carried out with the 13 respondents. Seeing as the first area of interest, *background and qualifications*, is presented in this chapter, I will move directly on to the three remaining areas that were covered in the interviews: *The use of English and other languages in work situations, specific incidents of success or failure involving the use of English or a foreign language*, and *the quality control procedures and course offers or needs in the work place.*

4 Results

This thesis is, as mentioned above, a follow-up study on Hellekjær's quantitative survey of language use and needs in Norwegian government ministries (Hellekjær 2010), carried out with the intention of expanding and elaborating on the findings in his study. I have examined a different sector and used a qualitative approach, all with the intention of going past the numbers and access the richer information to be found in the experiences, stories and examples which can best be told in words. In the resulting interviews my main aim was to obtain information from my informants about their occupational use of English. The respondents volunteered information willingly, and in this section I will present the results of these interviews. All translations into English are done by me.

As accounted for previously, I had defined four areas in which I wanted to collect information. These were: Background and qualifications, the use of English at work, specific situations in which the use of English either had succeeded or failed, and lastly, quality control and course needs as expressed by the respondents. In the following chapter I will present the results from the interviews focusing on these areas. The first area, regarding the education and qualifications of the respondents, however, has been presented in the previous chapter.

I will start by referring to the use of English as described by the respondents. Since the specific situations they refer to are a part of their use of the English language, these two sections are merged into one in this chapter. Then I will move on to explain about the misunderstandings and successes experienced by my informants, before I move on to the topic of quality control and course needs they expressed. Following this I will present the use of other languages than English reported by my respondents. I end this chapter with a section concerning guidelines for the use of English, a question that was added after I had conducted the pilot interview.

4.1 The transition from upper secondary education to university level

The interviews with my respondents opened up for conversation around the topic of education, and it became rapidly clear to me quite that a number of the respondents had experienced the transition from upper secondary school to higher education as particularly challenging. The general impression given was that the English they had learned in upper secondary school was far from sufficient to meet the demands of higher education, and that they therefore suffered accordingly during their first year as students. Recurring comments indicate that they felt ill-

prepared and that they somehow were not aware of the fact that they would be expected to delve into textbooks in English on subjects that were new to them. Simply acquiring the vocabulary of a subject one had never been exposed to in English was a challenge to many. "The English I had in upper secondary school was adequate for ordering food and speaking to tourists, but it would be pretty embarrassing to bring that into an international meeting". This is a statement made by Frank, who only had English the first year of upper secondary school. He does not think much of the level of English he attained in school, and explains that entering higher education was a slight shock in that matter. "It would have been useful to have had English included in other subjects, such as Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry, seeing as I lacked the vocabulary in these areas when I started studying them in university". The method Frank suggests as a way of learning language is what we know as CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), a method used in various projects around the country over the last years and presented in 'Språk åpner dører'[7].

Frank's suggestion was later repeated by Ove, who argued its place in Norwegian schools based on first-hand experience: "I believe that languages need to be integrated in other subjects. I think you need to have Chemistry lessons in English, which is something I have carried out myself". Ove further explains that this CLIL project was a highly unofficial one instigated by himself and the English teacher of his chemistry class in the early 1990s. He admits: "The students were a bit baffled at first, but bought the argument that it was a way of introducing English without making too much fuss around it". The challenge he envisages is that of the organisation of a CLIL-based teaching of foreign languages. Ove suggests cooperation between English teacher and subject teacher whenever possible. As it stands today there is no organised system within the Norwegian syllabus design which encourages or requires the use of CLIL, thus it remains a method used in limited projects and by particularly engaged teachers.

In the following I include some of the statements made by the other respondents about the transition from upper secondary school to university.

> Going from upper secondary to university was a giant shock. I studied Nutrition and Biology, and all our books were in English. I became really good at reading after a while, but the first time somebody said '*nutrition*' aloud to me I thought to myself – ah, that is the way it is pronounced! I had been reading '*nutrision*' and was happy with that. I achieved such a weird vocabulary, because I only absorbed it out of a book, you know. We (the students) only spoke Norwegian together (Stine).

[7] http://www.hiof.no/neted/upload/attachment/site/group55/UDIR_SprakApnerDorer_07nett.pdf (Accessed 30.07.10)

> It was quite a transition having to study in English. The courses I took had a lot of English literature, and I remember struggling with the terminology and spending a lot of time in the beginning. Almost the whole first year was spent using dictionaries before I started recognising the terminology of the literature. This is something we had too little of in upper secondary school (Trude).

> It is demanding starting studies which to a great extent are based on English literature. It was a demanding transition (Frida).

These statements show that my respondents, as many other students probably do as well, often experience a shock when they make the transition from upper secondary school to tertiary education, finding that a substantial amount of the course literature has to be read in English. Evidently, academic subjects taught in university are in many cases so specialised that the language and jargon used is unfamiliar to native speakers as well as foreign language speakers. Ian Tudor (Tudor in Howard & Brown 1997: 91) stresses that subject-specific academic reading is rooted in areas in which native speakers do not necessarily enter, therefore he characterises this language as language for specific purposes (hereafter referred to as LSP). Considering this, the struggle my respondents describe seems quite expected. They are the products of Norwegian upper secondary school and have attended a limited amount of English lessons, mostly comprising general English.

The sense of frustration and inadequacy my respondents reveal is particularly interesting since it is expressed by professionals ranging from the age of 33 (Frank) to 59 (Stine). This implies that the English taught in upper secondary school has perhaps not developed in a more advanced and specialised direction from the late 1960s to the 1990s. Considering the development which has taken place in curriculum design and didactics over the last decades, as well as the explosion of Anglo-American influence in the media (including an easier access to academic programmes and publications), this is something I find quite surprising.

4.2 The respondents' use of English

With regard to language use, all the respondents report that they use English at work. Five of them explain that they use English a lot of the time, whereas the other eight use it on a regular basis. It is, however, challenging for many to specify exactly how often they read, speak or write English. My impression after hearing them describe the tasks they perform and the situations they encounter, is that all of the respondents use English several times per week in a professional context.

Furthermore, all the respondents state that they use English both orally and in writing. They answer requests over the telephone from time to time, but the oral contexts referred to most were meetings and conferences. For some of the respondents this involves both presenting material and taking part in discussions and group work. Some say they are present as representatives of the Norwegian government and are therefore obliged to front Norway's political agenda in international contexts.

A majority of the respondents emphasise the use of oral English in meetings and conferences as particularly important when they are asked about their general use of English in professional contexts. These comprise the nine informants from Directorates A and C. The respondents from Directorate B all use oral English in meetings and at conferences as well. Furthermore, they to a larger degree than the respondents from A and C report using written English on an everyday basis. According to the respondents there is a policy in Directorate B encouraging most written documents to be published in English to make them accessible to international members of staff and cooperating partners. In contrast, the respondents from Directorates A and C describe their use of English as dependent on their relations with large international organisations, such as the European Union and The United Nations. These relations are of various kinds; they involve negotiations concerning internationally binding regulations as well as observational positions in EU-related forums where Norway holds no power to vote or take part.

4.3 The respondents' work tasks performed in English

Before I move on to present my findings from the interviews with my respondents, I would like to take the opportunity to clarify the tasks the respondents explained as typically performed in English.

Mads (Directorate A) explained that he works internationally in UN and EU-related forums, attending meetings, participating in debates with an overall role of presenting Norway's views. He also gives presentations at conferences. Ove, also from Directorate A, attends meetings in EU-related forums where he participates in debates and presents Norway's views. He also explains that he writes documents, generally in the form of regulations. Frank, from the same directorate, explains that he answers questions by phone calls and by e-mail, and attends meetings in EU-related forums where he presents Norway's views in debates. Stine (Directorate A), also attends meetings in EU and UN forums with the same intent, to discuss issues and present the Norwegian point of view on matters. She also works on coordinating regulations on all levels from national to global. The last respondent from Directorate A, Frida, mentions phone calls, e-mails and attendance at seminars and conferences as important settings where she uses English. She also attends EU forums

and mentions that she has given the occasional presentation in English.

Anna, representing Directorate B, mentions that contact with embassies is particularly important in her use of English. She does nearly all her written work in English, including comments on contracts and formal letters. In addition she mentions e-mails and phone calls as typical situations where English is used. Elisabeth, also from Directorate B, stresses phone calls as particularly typical situations in which she uses English. She reads documents, arranges conferences and leads debates and campaigns in English as well. Trude explains that she writes, reviews and reads documents in English, as well as participates in meetings in international forums. She also uses English whilst supervising projects internationally (on site in different countries). The last respondent from Directorate B, Eli, mentions reviewing international projects as one of the most frequent tasks she performs in English. In addition she hires consultants, writes and reads documents.

Truls, from Directorate C, gives lectures and leads discussion groups in English. Other examples of situations in which he uses English are writing and reading documents as well as attending conferences. Arne attends meetings in UN forums and with other international organisations, all in English. Hosting study visits in Norway and attending such abroad are other instances mentioned by him as typically English work situations. In addition, he receives phone calls, e-mails, and reads and writes documents in English. Stein explains his use of English as particularly important when he hosts study visits from abroad. He also attends conferences and international meetings where he uses English, as well as e-mails. The last respondent from Directorate C, Vilde, uses English when she attends conferences, international UN-related meetings and gives lectures internationally. She also reads and writes documents in English.

To sum up so far, English is used by my respondents in a variety of settings, among others meetings and conferences, as described in the previous section. The general impression I am left with, nevertheless, is that on the whole the respondents manage rather well when they use English in work-related contexts. Many report that they give presentations and lectures as well as negotiate and discuss in international network groups without it posing any great challenge.

4.4 The watershed - the great English shock

The use of English in the directorates has increased over the last decades due to more international contact. However, for some directorates this change appears to have been more sudden compared to others. Whereas Directorate B has a long history of internationally directed assignments others, such as Directorate A, entered into the international arena rather rapidly due to

the establishment of the European Economic Agreement Area in the early 1990s. This was a watershed concerning the use of English for Directorate A, according to my respondents. Stine, from Directorate A, worked in the organisation during the transition period in the early 1990s, and she explains that the agreement has had pronounced implications on the work performed in Directorate A. She sums it up like this:

> The great change occurred in 1992-93 with the EEA agreement. This was the *great English shock* for the case workers in our directorate. Earlier it was a private matter what you knew or did not know (with regard to English). This was definitely a great change involving my work tasks, where suddenly my pile of documents was all in English! When this change occurred some of us started 'working up a fuss' over the need for English courses.

Stine and her colleagues' reactions are probably as can be expected following a sudden change of international obligations that require skills for which there had been little or no advance preparation. The framework in which she and her colleagues had been used to work was all of a sudden changed, implying that new routines had to be set up and followed. These new routines entailed using English to a substantially greater degree than they had been prepared for, seemingly without being provided with the training to do so. Stine adds in the same context: "There had to be a limit as to what was to be expected of us! I jump in, and generally I stay afloat, but in this situation I would like to have felt more comfortable."

4.5 Language as a means of domination

Early on in the interviews it became clear to me that many of the respondents saw a connection between having a good command of the English language and gaining influence in meetings and negotiations internationally. During these sessions, when some gain influence, this comes at the expense of others losing theirs. This is the single most serious consequence of inadequate language proficiency noted by my informants, and this was mentioned by respondents at all levels of responsibility – from adviser to executive level.

The use of English in meetings in many cases imply discussing issues the respondents have been able to prepare in advance on the one hand, and on the other issues which are spontaneously addressed. The latter is commented on as particularly challenging by some of the respondents, because they feel that they are not linguistically flexible enough to take advantage of the opportunities these impromptu discussions open up for. There is a sense of a need to warm up to the occasion, as described by Frank and Stine in the excerpts below:

> When we are in Brussels, if we have something we wish to say in meetings we can generally

> prepare ourselves well. You can even read out what you want to say, so I find that relatively easy. In the UN groups I find it noticeably worse, because we discuss more spontaneously, therefore it is hard to be prepared. I feel it takes a day before I get into it. I would have liked to practise more oral English on a daily basis in order to make the language flow so I can speak while I am thinking (Frank).

> In meetings where you have to contribute on various issues throughout the meeting I feel I would like to be more confident. I feel I should have had a stay abroad in order to [..] I find that 'thinking' the language over longer stretches of time helps you develop it differently to what happens during a two day meeting. This is something I have been thinking of, but never managed to realise (Stine).

The need to warm up for a day or two, or the feeling of not being confident enough to fully participate, as expressed above, may lead to situations where the Norwegian representatives hold back or refrain from participating in important discussions. If this is the case, it opens up for other, more confident representatives from other countries, namely the English-speaking ones, to gain ground and influence. Indeed, situations like these may pose a problem for the democratic function these forums are intended to serve. Several of the respondents stressed the imbalance of power which occurs when some representatives are native speakers of English and others are not. This imbalance is not a contributor to the democratic process which is meant to take place in the forums described by my respondents. When representatives who speak English as a first language can concentrate on building arguments in their field of expertise, others, like my informants may be struggling to understand single words, arguments and nuances in the complex English that is spoken. When the debates are spontaneous they are likely to struggle even more, seeing as they have not been able to prepare themselves for every given situation or topic which may occur. These are some of the comments made in this context:

> You do notice that the English-speaking representatives win just about every discussion. There are often a lot of Americans you have to discuss with and they have a vocabulary that is out-of-this-world. American lawyers are dreadful, since they deliberately use the most difficult words they can come up with, and use the language as a means of domination, in order to make sure that half of the room has not understood what they said. Very few participants dare ask questions, they are afraid to lose face (Frank).

> In international contexts it generally turns out to be the English-speaking representatives who are good at talking. They speak perfectly, so you can learn from them, but it is easy to feel inferior (Mads).

> The funny thing is that it is generally the English who assist us in the English language, and a lot of the time we discuss how to formulate regulations. This is something I tell my colleagues, which I have learnt through bitter experience – When the English want a change of the wording in a paragraph and you do not hear the difference between the options, you need to ask yourself why. Normally you would think that there is something I do not understand, and that I am stupid. There have been incidents, though, where they have managed to change the wording and I have, in hindsight, understood that the change meant something which I did not understand at the time because my knowledge of English is so limited. To me the words were synonyms, but that is something you learn, languages have so many nuances (Stine).

> The English say 'this Norwegian suggestion is very good', and you know that the longer they keep on praising your suggestion at one point there comes a *but* or a *however*. When they have been at it for a while they have knocked down your entire suggestion and told you what an amateur you are. This is a culture we are not familiar with at all. We ask to speak, say our point and leave it at that. We do not repeat our point later in the discussion, we actually expect people to remember what we have said, which is totally wrong, of course. One thing is the language, another is the Norwegian culture, which crashes so totally. We are so impolite, straightforward and coarse, and that is an additional aspect to the language issue. Being less Norwegian is as great a challenge as speaking English. (Stine)

The statements above imply that the power in the forums the respondents from Directorate A participate in is to a great extent held by the English-speaking representatives. This, in turn, may have negative consequences for the participants who are less confident in English. Having the language as an asset rather than a complication in these contexts can easily lead to an imbalance of power in favour of the native speakers. Many respondents commented on this issue, describing it as a problem in international cooperation. Most of the meetings referred to by my respondents are conducted in English, therefore the participants' language proficiency plays a significant part in securing that Norwegian interests are looked after in the best possible way. As pinpointed by my respondents: participants who do not master English are better off staying away from such meetings, as they have no chance of contributing to achieving the results required. One of the

respondents who accentuated this particular issue was Frank: “There are a lot of people at management level who should probably never take part in international meetings.”

In other words, it seems that to be able to be able to promote one’s views and thus earn political influence, language proficiency is vital. However, many of my respondents stress that cultural competence is equally important as language. The obvious bond between the two is not acknowledged to a sufficient degree in any of the directorates, according to my informants. One of them expressed the challenge this way: “Language is not simply translated letters, it is so much more. It is how you communicate, how you fail to communicate.” (Trude)

This relationship between language and culture was referred to repeatedly, and must be taken seriously if international relations are to prove beneficial to Norwegian interests. According to my respondents this is a field where significant improvements can be made. How important this is is stated quite explicitly by Stine:

> Language is one thing and culture another, and they are so closely linked together. You cannot somehow reduce international work to ‘if I speak good English I can handle it.’ It is a facet among others. Language is only a part of the understanding, but if you do not know the language you cannot even get started.

The respondents pinpointed this vital aspect of language – an aspect which is often overlooked and neglected – because they have experienced it or observed it themselves. The information I collected in the interviews clearly indicates that Norwegian directorate representatives who work internationally in negotiation and cooperation encounter cultural as well as linguistic barriers which, they claim, sometimes stand in the way of Norway’s interests. It seems as it is the native speakers of English who “hold the best cards”, so to speak.

Although a majority of comments were made that stressed the obvious disadvantage held by foreign speakers of English in a variety of meetings and conferences, there were still some who reported that they felt they managed to make themselves understood and gain results even though their English is far from perfect. Mads is one of these respondents, explaining that he finds the other representatives who also speak English as a foreign language are often reassured by the Norwegians' simpler English:

> Even though we do not have English as our first language, and our vocabulary is more limited, our message may be understood just as well, especially by those who are not very good at English, because an American or a British person will simply go on and on, and it becomes very complicated with subordinate clauses and such. There is an advantage in not being too advanced, because you can emphasise your points more easily and your

> contributions are shorter. This can communicate just as well, and has worked for me. When other representatives come over to me and say ' what you said was sensible', or when they support me whilst in the middle of a debate – that makes me feel more confident within the situation (Mads).

As previously mentioned, in Directorate B English is used regularly in written documentation, according to my respondents. These respondents accentuate the positive consequences this has on international cooperation, in that material and documentation is accessible to partners and can be used abroad without having to be translated by others at a later stage. Two of the respondents expressed it this way:

> I would say that 70% of what I write needs to be in English. [..] In some contexts I suggest using English in order for it to accessible to more people. [..] I believe that those who do not understand Norwegian, representing the majority of the people in the organisations we cooperate with, will be excluded if we only use Norwegian. (Trude)

> All dialogue with the embassies is carried out in English. [..] Even if I deal with Norwegians we use English in written communication. This is done in order for them to be able to use what we have written in negotiation with their partners, so the texts can be referred to directly. [..] (Anna)

Summary of sections 4.1 to 4.5

In these sections I have attempted to specify the tasks performed by the respondents in English, and show specific examples of situations they shared with me. I discovered that several of my respondents had been in situations where they had found they were reluctant to use English, mainly because they found it difficult to participate and discuss when they had to think on the spot. In this context the use of English as a means of domination became a topic, seeing as the English-speaking representatives were often said to take advantage of the inferior language competence held by the non-native speakers.

As is conveyed in this section, a lot of important work in the directorates is carried out in international forums where the use of English is vital to all parties. Most respondents quoted had experienced some challenges or obstacles in this context, being it that they had experienced not being able to express their views or having had suggestions put down, or hesitating to speak in international contexts. The cultural aspect of language competence was also brought forward, and it is interesting to see that the respondents view this as such an important factor in their

communication in English. I also included that several respondents stressed the vital importance written documentation in English has to their work, in particular in Directorate B.

4.6 Successes and misunderstandings

In this section I would like to look more specifically into examples of situations where the respondents have experienced either successes or misunderstandings in their use of English. Despite some difficulties, a majority of the respondents gave examples of success linked to their use of English, implying that on a general basis they feel confident and are able to communicate effectively. My overall impression of the respondents is that practice and good preparation are among the factors which enhance their feeling of success. In order to experience success in the demanding situations they participate in, many of the respondents pinpoint the need to be dedicated to improving and developing their skills in English. This was exemplified by the respondents in their own work, like Stein's experience going to London for a conference:

> Last summer I went on a conference to London. What you experience is that English is not simply English. You have the small talk, the specific English of your working field and the tourist English. These are three different disciplines you need competence in. In my education I have not learnt a lot of specific English. There has been a lot of small talk and a lot of tourist English. And then having to go in and do workshops and discuss our field of work, for that one must be well prepared. Luckily for me I was, because I expected it to be a challenge. If I had not been prepared I would have 'hit a wall' (Stein).

Stein's experience sums up the abovementioned impressions claiming that language is closely linked to culture and that working to improve one's skills is vital in order to succeed in work-related use of English.

It also became clear that the extent to which my respondents felt confident influenced their feeling of success. The ones who were used to speaking English in various forums and had years of experience in doing so appeared to be at ease with their competence and ability to perform their best, be it in English or Norwegian. These respondents were typically the ones with positions that demanded the use of English on a regular basis. However, they expressed that their advanced level of competence was not necessarily taken for granted, and was much appreciated. These are the comments made by two of the respondents in this context:

> I had a management position in another company a few years ago, and they found it such a relief – 'Oh, God, can you do this! Great!' There are hardly any jobs at the level I have been working where my English skills have not been useful to me. It is something positive you

can bring into almost any job where you have external contacts. Mastering English is very useful (Elisabeth).

Being able to lead debates in English is particularly challenging, because you need to hear what people are saying, catch a point in mid-air and take it to the next person. I have experienced this as a success many times, since it is a skill very few master. Being able to listen, knowing the language so well that you can hear when something controversial comes up and take it further. I think the criterion of success is knowing the language so well that you can listen and respond. This has given me a special position in the directorate, the fact that I master it so well (Elisabeth).

In my experience the embassies, used to dealing with the Ministry in Norwegian, appreciate receiving material in English from us, seeing how user friendly it is for them in their work (Anna).

The statements above describing successes in the use of English imply that language competence is not taken for granted in the ministries or major companies for that matter, and that there are situations where the need for language proficiency is not met. Therefore it is interesting to note that the respondents all underline the competence they keep building and the practice they engage in as vital factors enabling them to achieve the kinds of successes their work requires. The respondents' statements also indicate that English proficiency at a high level is uncommon among the general staff in the directorates, therefore it is the more noticeable when it is applied by competent members of staff.

4.6.1 Challenges

Mads is one of the respondents who expresses confidence in giving presentations in English. He maintains this confidence, but at the same time he expresses that the English-speaking nations have an advantage. However, both Mads and some of the other respondents mentioned challenging situations from personal experience, even though few specific misunderstandings were referred to.

It would seem that incidents causing confusion and misunderstandings can easily occur when English is used as a lingua franca as well, particularly when terms are used differently by the parties communicating. Stein gave an example of such a situation from his experience:

Before Christmas we hosted a visit from a Chinese delegation, and had to use an interpreter

(English to Chinese). This was demanding, partly because interpreters are human beings representing their own cultures and may perceive English terms differently from us. We use MD for Medical Doctor, whereas the Chinese perceived this as 'Mental Doctor'. It took some time before we realised that we were talking about completely different matters.

It became clear to me that several of the respondents felt that they were not always able to perform their job to the standard they did when they spoke Norwegian when they were representing Norway internationally in English. Linguistic power play from the English-speaking representatives was one factor, and the challenge of being able to master complex work-related terms in English another. Interestingly enough, these issues were typical of the problems facing my respondents, as opposed to the 'misunderstandings' one might have reason to expect. This was very interesting to me as a researcher, seeing as one of the aforementioned four sections of the interview was named 'successes and misunderstandings.' Perhaps I was looking for misunderstandings and expected tales of that kind, rather than power play and language used as a means of domination in international cooperation. However, the latter was actually the most noted, and is therefore an important finding. Statements made by my respondents exemplifying this follow below:

> In international contexts it tends to be the case that those who represent English-speaking countries are very good at speaking, they speak perfectly. That way you can learn from them, but it is easy to feel inferior (Mads).

> You think more about what it sounds like than getting your message across. If I had had more practice I might have become more active in discussions. As it stands I tend to say something only when I feel that there is really a need for it (Frank).

> The things I have to say are difficult enough in Norwegian (Frank)

In other words, a high level of English proficiency is required to enable respondents to speak up in discussions and thus achieve influence in the forums they attend. This was repeatedly expressed by many of my respondents, and is emphasised by Ove: "I have just been to Brussels for a two-day meeting, and to keep up there you need to speak English. Norway does not benefit from sending somebody down there who just sits and listens without saying anything, not speaking to anybody." His impression that inadequate language skills are damaging to the work is shared by Frank who says: "On a general basis we are not very proficient in languages here (in Directorate A). There are a lot of people on management level who should probably never take part in international meetings."

Section summary

In this section I have accounted for some of the successes and misunderstandings experienced by my respondents. I found that they all stressed the importance of good preparation in order to be able to meet the needs of the situations they were put in. Another point which was brought forward was the accounts of incidents where my informants reported that their language competence was unexpected or seen as a bonus to their employer. With regard to misunderstandings caused by language, the most prominent statements revealed that not so many misunderstandings occur. Instead, it is a problem that many of my respondents refrain from speaking when they are insecure, thus excluding themselves from discussions of vital importance in international meetings. This comes across as a possible serious consequence for Norwegian international relations.

4.7 Quality control and course needs

As a natural consequence following the topic of the use of English comes the desire to examine how competence levels can be raised and whether courses are offered by the employer. Naturally this was something I was interested in finding out more about.

4.7.1 Translation challenges

Several of the respondents emphasise the use of translations, both in written documents and orally in meetings as challenging. There seems to be a widespread use of colleagues for proofreading and assisting in English texts, be it from PowerPoint presentations to formal letters. However, as far as reports are concerned, these appear to be written by outside translation agencies, at least in Directorates A and C. Many of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the work provided by some of the translators, mainly because they appeared not to know the topic and specialised language well enough. The respondents expressed their concern based on the fact that they are the professionals behind the reports, and therefore feel responsible for the quality of the translations as well. It is understandable that the respondents are concerned that their work is presented in the most correct manner when translated. Consequently, they spend time and effort in order to ensure that this quality is maintained when they proofread and edit the translated reports. Below are some comments made by the respondents:

> We translate Norwegian publications into English and other languages. This job is often outsourced to professional translators, but we need to supervise the result, because in the end, we are responsible for the content. We need to check the precision. Sometimes we encounter problems. I would have profited from knowing languages better, I see that clearly,

in order to be able to check the quality of the translations (Vilde).

We buy consultancy services from companies in order to get the translations of written publications right. We make the draft manuscripts ourselves, and they improve them. This is because the level of precision is so high, and it needs to be correct in its context (Truls).

Sometimes I doubt the Norwegian translations, and then I have to go back to the original text and see what it says, in order to establish whether the translation is correct. They are not always correct. Sometimes we go to the English, the French and the German text to see how they have translated them. Not all terms are translatable. It is a matter of precision. We make rules and regulations for people, and that means that the level of precision is important (Ove).

We have sometimes paid translators to do this (translate reports), and often that has resulted in terribly bad quality. They are not field professionals, and that means we have to go over the reports again, and it becomes very expensive and takes a lot of time. (Stine).

According to the statements above, the language competence of the respondents plays a significant role even when outside professionals are conducting the translations. This is because the topics are so specialised they as professionals are obliged to ensure the precision of the translations. In other words, their language competence still matters for the end result even when they use professional translators. As Ove mentions, sometimes it is necessary to go through translations from several languages, something which can only be done if the directorate has staff that are proficient in the languages represented. This is not always the case, thus in some instances there might not be staff in-house who can take it upon themselves to quality check reports like Ove clearly does.

Another important aspect of the language in the reports in question is shown by Stine, who suggests that the researchers writing the reports often are better qualified than the translators to do the job, simply because they are familiar with the topic field and the terms used in English: "Researchers who are very good at English work on these projects, and it is much better when they can translate it [..] The researchers who write reports for us master English; they have generally spent time as researchers abroad." (Stine)

In the majority of meetings my respondents attend English is used as the only language. This is a result of several considerations, first and foremost costs and organisational. It is believed that in

most forums English is enough, and that most representatives manage well using only English. In larger group meetings involving representatives from countries where English is not commonly taught, translation takes place. In organisations such as the EU and the UN there are also guidelines for when translations in meetings should take place. However, according to my respondents the use of translation is on the decline. This was particularly stressed when some of them commented on the expansion of the EU which has taken place so rapidly over the last years. The more countries join, the greater the focus has to be on a few languages, otherwise the organisation and cost of structuring meetings might become impractical. This issue is not necessarily agreed upon within the EU. However, the challenge seems apparent to my respondents involved in EU-related cooperation.

With regard to the quality of the services, the oral translations taking place in meetings were commented on as being of varying quality. Some respondents expressed frustration with this, since it may impact the discussions and outcomes of the meetings. One of the comments came from Stine:

> There are great variations in the translations, both from French to English and German to English. It can make you quite sad. They (the interpreters) change every half hour in their booths [..] and sometimes you learn to hate one of them, because you think – God how terrible! I do not even understand what you are saying! Translating is difficult, everything goes quickly, we are dealing with a narrow topic field, and misunderstandings easily occur (Stine).

For writing, there is a clear understanding among all the interviewees that written documents need to be checked before being published. However, according to the information I have obtained in the interviews there seem to be different practices. As aforementioned, reports and publications tend to be translated by outside agencies, particularly in Directorate A and C. However, other documents are only checked informally by colleagues. This arrangement is presented as an informal procedure of quality control performed by the colleagues on a voluntary basis:

> We guide each other, but only on a voluntary basis. I find it a great advantage when others can look at what I have done and give me feedback on it (Frida).

> We go over each other's work. We have colleagues in our department also working with international partners who are not as confident in English, so we work together in order for it to look the best possible and be correct. We have a pretty flat structure, so if I am insecure about something I ask directly about it (Arne).

We use each other here, and that works (Vilde).

According to my respondents there is a variety of ways in which the quality of documents and presentations is ensured. The recurring comments are that external agencies used for translations provide work of various quality, mainly due to their not being familiar with the field of work they are asked to translate in. This appears to be typical of the challenges these directorates face – their work is highly specialised and the topic field narrow, therefore it seems challenging to be able to find external translators who can meet their standards. As some of them mentioned, it is hard for them to trust that these agencies can do the translation work to a satisfactory standard, hence they have to check the work and basically end up doing the job themselves.

The abovementioned distrust and negative experience in using agencies could explain the reason why the respondents insist on using each other when they need help in English language tasks. They trust each other as professionals in their field, therefore they rely on colleagues in language questions as well, seeing as the language required is so field specific in many instances.

4.7.2 Training and courses

Following the topic concerning the use of English, it appeared relevant to ask the respondents about their views on the need for work-related language training. In this section I was interested in the specific needs the respondents felt personally, as well as the more general and visionary ideas they could identify as beneficial to carry out for their organisation or unit.

Most of the respondents spoke in positive terms about the need and will to learn English and stay updated, seeing as this would be beneficial to their work performance. However, one of the respondents expressed that she felt a certain disinterest in language learning from her colleagues and subordinates: “I do not think it seems like enough people are concerned with raising the competence level through language training.” This is a statement made by Elisabeth as we entered into the topic area of course needs. She claims that her Directorate B meets any request for increased competence in languages with an offer of language courses. The deciding factor, according to her, is the initiative on the employee's part: “There is a greater lack of initiative from the staff regarding language training than there is from the management's side.” If somebody were to take the initiative and say 'I want to learn Spanish', it would be perfectly possible.”

However, there are clear differences between the directorates when it comes to course offers – Directorate A has their own in-house English teacher, who has a 50% position arranging courses and guiding staff on language issues. The respondents from Directorate A were all aware of his presence. However, there were contradictory views on how well the arrangement met the needs of

the different target groups. These are some of the comments made:

> We have in-house English courses which I participate in. They are tailor made – for international meetings, informal meetings, small talk. Writing courses – e-mails, letters, etc. The teacher has been here at least 10 years. Our employer organises language courses and development in a good manner (Frida).

> The language teacher has a basic EU course, a course on meetings, dealing with formalities and presentation skills. Our employer organises the possibilities for our language development to a far greater degree than what is normal, I would imagine. These are often useful for those on a lower competence level of English, in order for them to improve their basic mistakes. The rest of us rattle off a couple of sentences, and that is it. The courses are at too low a level (Frank).

> I believe they (the directorate) give it high priority, seeing as we have the teacher who works part time giving courses. He can be approached with questions as well (Mads).

> We have this English teacher who holds courses, and I believe he is used when there is a need for it. Generally we help each other (Stine).

Directorate B, engaging mainly in international work, seems to have a different approach to increasing the language competence of its staff. According to the respondents, the ministry responsible for A has its own section that arranges courses in languages. Here are some of their comments:

> The ministry has a very good and solid system for language training, because there are so many members of their staff going abroad at any given time. We in the directorate can use these for free as well. In this area I find that the organisation of these courses works well. There are other courses in specific English, at The London School of Economics, which we are encouraged to participate in. I have not been able to make use of this offer, mainly because of my personal obligations at home. It is also a matter of finding the time of the year when you are the least busy, because your work tasks are still there (Anna).

> The ministry's course section runs a variety of language courses, at many levels. I hope, and believe that these offers exist, even to those who are not going abroad using the language

> immediately. One is encouraged to raise one's competence level. We have competence plans, for departments and individuals, so everybody is able to suggest what competence s/he wants to build on [..] Language proficiency should be just as important as field competence, ICT competence and all other systems we deal with. It is vital that the directorate has staff who have the necessary language skills, and that this competence is maintained and perhaps improved. This could be among our strategic goals (Trude).

In Directorate C, however, there seems to be some confusion as to what opportunities there are for employees who need language courses. Three out of the four respondents I interviewed here, including a department head, were unaware of the fact that they may approach their manager if and when they need to improve their competence in English or foreign languages. These are a few of the comments from directorate C:

> There is no system. I do not know whether there are any offers of language courses. For my own part I have had English speaking jobs, and I feel quite competent. But I do see that there are things that could be better from an official Norwegian perspective, not among my colleagues, but generally in Norway. Norwegians have a perception of being very good at English, without it necessarily being the case (Truls).

> I have not checked whether my employer offers courses in languages. I have never felt the need. Perhaps I should check it out and get a course in English! Norwegians in general are quite good at English (Vilde).

> There are no in-house courses. There are no special arrangements, not that I know of, anyway, and I believe one would have to cover the cost of a language course oneself (Stein).

> We do not organise any specific competence development linked up to languages. If a member of staff needs training s/he approaches his or her manager. The manager has resources in his or her department which are earmarked for the development of competence (Truls).

As is seen from the quotes above there seems to be a communication issue in Directorate C, when three out of four respondents answer that they do not know of any possibilities for courses in English or other languages, whereas the fourth respondent seems to know otherwise. I have not examined the information procedures in Directorate C, thus can therefore merely report what my

informants have told me. It is worth noting that the respondents represent several sections, therefore the lack of information about language course possibilities appears to be present in several departments.

Two of the respondents in Directorate C shared plans and ideas they had in order to improve the language competence, all based on practical experience and the organisation's need. Their agenda appeared to be the development of the directorate through raising the competence among its employees. Truls, being a department head, explained his work in relation to this:

> I have made a plan called 'Basic Administration Knowledge' in which language is not included for the time being. This plan is made to secure that administrative skills are held by everybody, and that we have a foundation for these. The issue of language is one of the things I want to include in the plan as we go along. It is meant to be a basis skills plan, and English and French are in 'the pipeline' (Truls).

Stein, working on adviser level and experiencing some obstacles in everyday work situations, had a clear idea of what he needed the most in order to improve his own use of English:

> If there had been English courses in specific field terminology and administration I would have attended them. This is something I feel insecure about. Of course you learn the terms as you become more experienced, but it would be good to have a broader, more confident base. It is important when you represent the state and travel around and meet people, to use terms that are acceptable for the state. This is missing. When it comes to centralised services there is no 'word list' deciding which terms we should use, neither in English nor any other language. This leads to different terms being used depending upon who writes the text, and these can be interpreted differently regarding content (Stein).

Furthermore, Stein also explained how offering training to the staff can serve the overarching goals of an organisation, namely, that the more people who are confident users of English, the more flexibility there is within the organisation to meet various tasks involving international contact. He expressed himself in this manner:

> I believe we can achieve something by offering language courses. It makes the members of staff more confident. Today many hesitate to meet foreign delegations, etc. and that means there is more work for the few who are confident. Making people more confident can make us more flexible, more people can help solve problems (Stein).

4.7.3 Suggestions of cooperation

One of the measures for improvement of English skills mentioned by several of my

respondents during the interviews, was for closer cooperation between the education system and the public sector. They argued that such a relation could possibly strengthen the future recruiting of professionals to work in the public sector. The main motive mentioned by the interviewees was that young students do not necessarily see which qualifications such positions require, and that in meeting the 'real world' they might see more clearly what education could lead to a job in the directorates. A couple of the respondents expressed themselves like this:

> We could probably become better at making contact with schools, the educational institutions, to show what they (the students) can expect to encounter in the real life [..] and to have the opportunity to become curious about things. I believe there should be a close contact between schools and real life, and that resources should be set aside in order for the schools to be able to participate in the development all the way. So many things happen so fast, and keeping up with the development becomes a challenge (Frida).

> I miss a closer contact between the educational authorities and the directorate. I believe that a lot of the pedagogical competence and the language competence, which can be found both in upper secondary schools and universities can be put to better use. I envisage a language project, for example, in which there could be a form of apprenticeship, where somebody who is interested in languages could work as case worker for, let us say, eight weeks. The mutual effect could be quite great [..] It could also be a useful angle for the schools, in order to find new ways of working on the curriculum. It could also be giving you as a teacher input as to how our reality is, you could see how we work, and in that way you could bring in examples from our directorate in your teaching. I believe there is a need for this. Perhaps you would see that the way we teach languages is not quite where it should be, and then work on. We need this important contact. We are so 'silo orientated' in this country. Differentiation is important, in relation to what you study, even in upper secondary school (Truls).

The quotes above represent positive engagement from the part of the respondents, who see the potential in a closer contact between the institutions they represent and the educational world, represented by the educational authorities, teachers at all levels and the students.

Section summary

In this section I have provided information regarding the possibilities for language training in the three directorates I have examined. There seem to be striking differences in how the issue of

English competence is approached in these directorates, according to my informants. Directorate A has an in-house English teacher, B reaps the benefit from its ministry having their own course section, whereas C appears to have no clear-cut system at all. This can perhaps be why three out of four respondents in Directorate C are unsure and uninformed about what the possibilities for English courses are in their directorate. Two of them even thought they would have to cover the cost of such courses themselves. In Directorates A and B the respondents seemed better informed about their options. However, in A there were comments made claiming that the courses offered did not appeal to the more advanced speakers of English. In Directorate B the only negative comments made pointed to the fact that there never seems to be time to take extra courses and that the pressures of work may deter people from signing up for them.

Many of the respondents expressed the need for better English competence in their field of work and saw this as one important aspect in improving the work results. As presented above, Stein's quote illustrates this very well. The better the staff are, the better quality their work will be.

4.7.4 Guidelines for using English

As I have mentioned already, the directorates I have visited are all involved in areas where English is used to a substantial degree. This indicates that English is used in various situations, implying that staff need to assess when, how and for which tasks it is appropriate to speak and write English. In most instances this will not pose a problem. However, in the first interview the question of guidelines for the use of English came up, initiated by Anna from Directorate B. The fact that she brought it up made me think that this was something I needed to incorporate in all of the interviews. This is what Anna said on the issue of guidelines for the use of English:

> I have sometimes thought about whether my organisation (Directorate B) has any guidelines for the use of English and Norwegian. I know the ministry has some guidelines when it comes to using Norwegian in sensitive matters, but I have never worked in areas where they deal with strict political and sensitive issues. I find it naïve to think that [..] people do translate from Norwegian as well. There may also be views considering the Norwegian language being at risk, and conservative forces within the ministry who do not want things to get out of control. I believe it is good that we open up to English, but that we perhaps should have some guidelines on when one should and could use English and foreign languages instead of Norwegian. Simply some user manuals."

Introducing the question of guidelines for the use of English did not appear to address a topic which most of the respondents had considered. Most of them claimed it was quite natural and dependent upon the situation whether or not English should be used. They explained that they

answer in English when they are addressed in English, whether this is orally or in written communication. An interesting feature of this question of guidelines is the fact that none of the respondents seem to know whether their directorate has adopted any or not. This is, perhaps, an apt illustration of the position of English and other foreign languages in the Norwegian public sector today. While the languages are used occupationally in oral and written contexts, however, there is no apparent structure or framework supporting when and how this can be put to the best possible use. Later in this chapter I will recount my respondents' comments on this issue focusing on evaluating and planning competency plans for the directorates, an area where languages seem to be absent. As for the use of guidelines, these are some of the recurring comments:

> We may very well have guidelines for the use of English and foreign languages, but I cannot remember if we do, and I have not gone looking for them. If you receive a letter in English you answer it in English (Eli).

> I do not know if we have any formal guidelines for the use of languages. In my department we do not deal with many publications, our work is more informal. But I can imagine that the ones working on publications would want some specific guidelines (Elisabeth).

> I have not missed any other guidelines than a word list with a definition of terms. It would be very handy to have. It would save us a lot of time (Stein).

> We do not have any guidelines, and I have not missed any. We do see that there are an increasing number of people in Norway with a minority background, and therefore a greater need for us to print publications in other languages than Norwegian. This is something we are increasingly aware of (Vilde).

> I do not know of any guidelines for the use of languages, have not thought about it [..] I have not missed any, either (Arne).

> There probably are. I answer in English when I am approached in English. Sometimes immigrants approach me who speak very little Norwegian. Then it might have been good to have rules or policies. We have no duty to guide in any other language than Norwegian. I would like to have access to an interpretation service, somewhere I could call up when I

needed help (Frank).

> We use Norwegian in just about everything we do on a national level. It comes quite naturally, in a way. When there is international cooperation we use English, apart from within the Nordic countries, which the Finnish are not always too happy about (Mads).

Some of the respondents explained that the language issue sometimes causes problems when reports are written. The directorates act as government bodies, thus the reports are as a rule published in Norwegian. However, as several of my respondents explain, these reports are of no use in international cooperation if they are not also published in English. This goes for many types of reports, but is particularly important in research and developmental contexts, where reports tend to carry the weight to shape and alter important decisions being made. Language is clearly an important issue that is discussed when written reports are planned in the directorates, and is illustrated by the quotes below:

> If we write a report we have to carefully consider whether it should be in Norwegian or English, depending on whether it is made for the Norwegian or international public. Most of the reports we write are in Norwegian, intended for the Norwegian public. Some are written in English, with an abstract in Norwegian. I find it important that we translate Norwegian reports into English, at least an abstract of them (Mads).

> We perform a lot of important research in Norway. If that research is to be made useful to other nations, we have to publish in English. We cannot expect others to learn Norwegian. The fact that we make our knowledge and competence available to others by using English is completely vital. In order to be able to reach out to the world it is absolutely necessary (Vilde).

> We always have big discussions when we [..] we pay for large projects which are finalised with a report, and they have traditionally been in Norwegian with an English abstract. We do not pay for these projects for fun, we use them for documentation, and we have seen a shift towards more English. It has to be in Norwegian, because that is demanded in the state administration [..] But it makes our job easier when we can send it to the EU without having to translate it, which we sometimes have had to do. When it is meant for international use one might just as well include it in the contract that it should be written in English (Stine).

Section summary

In this section I have presented the respondents' perceptions of which guidelines they follow in their use of English in their work. It was evident that this was not a topic they had given much thought to beforehand, largely because most of them saw it as natural to answer in English when approached in English. However, none of the respondents knew if their directorate had any explicit guidelines for the use of English, and very few had felt this as a problem. The issues mentioned were the need for glossaries in order to safeguard that written documents would stick to an approved terminology rather than the choice of terms relying on the individual case worker, and a clear instruction or agreement concerning which languages reports should be written in.

4.7.5 The use of other foreign languages

When I set out to write this thesis, my aim for the study was to look at the use of English in three different Norwegian state directorates. However, I had decided from the start to look for information on other languages as well, seeing that such information would be of interest to my study. As the interviews progressed it became clear to me that very few of the respondents made use of other languages than English in their work. As a result of this I decided to focus on the respondents' use of English, therefore the material concerning the use of foreign languages which will be presented in this section is somewhat outside the focus of this thesis. However, I have chosen to include the results from this topic as well, seeing as they provide interesting information about language policies and needs as seen from the point of view of my respondents.

French was the language mentioned by most of the respondents as one of importance in the international work they are engaged in. Its status as official language in several international organisations such as the EU and the UN demonstrates that it is a language which must be mastered by a number of Norwegian government staff, such as my respondents. Several of them expressed in clear terms that they had been in situations where the need to use French had been apparent, and that they could see French as an asset for reaching further professionally. The other language pointed out by several respondents was German, another language predominantly important in European contexts. The need for more people speaking French was stressed by several of the respondents:

> If I were to wish for some specific improvement in the language field, it would have to be to increase the competence in French. English is important, but a lot of dealings take place using French, and a lot passes you by [..] The network you can build if you know French is incredibly valuable. If you ask me what the single most important issue regarding language

> training in our directorate is, I would say it is the need to perfection our French (Truls).

> Brussels functions in French. When I worked for the Commission I worked with some highly qualified people, proficient in many languages. In order to have a career in the Commission you need to be able to chair a meeting in at least three different languages. We are not talking about dabbling in the field. This is a must if you wish to have a career there. My department head spoke eight different languages (Stine).

> The use of French in one of the international organisations we deal with is quite extensive, so I asked specifically the first time I went abroad whether it was necessary to speak French to work there, but was told that it was not the case. It is an advantage, of course, but one can make do with English (Arne).

The respondents clearly treasure competence in foreign languages and stress the importance of this in international cooperation. In fact, the staff who use other languages than English become key contacts towards the language groups they communicate with because of their language competence. They are able to reach the cooperating partners at a different level to what they would achieve if they were using English. This is illustrated by Ove who is fluent in German:

> Since I speak German it makes it much easier for me to make contact with the Germans, who represent a powerful nation in Europe. I 'small talk' with them and pick up on how they view various issues. This gives me a great advantage. You always reach further when you speak their first language, no matter what context (Ove).

> I have been sitting in meetings (in the EU Commission) at the back of the hall when they have made important decisions. With my knowledge of French, German and English I have understood what has been going on, and have been able to approach the Danish representative, who had not understood, to explain and pinpoint what was going on, and then he or she could interrupt and follow-up on the issue (Truls).

The quotes above indicate that language proficiency beyond English is vital to Norwegian interests in international work. The advantages Ove and Truls point out are obvious: Those who master other foreign languages are able to make contact with international partners in a very different way compared to those who rely on English as a lingua franca. As for the statement Truls makes, it is a prime example of the complex situations where international work takes place. He

refers to a setting where the level of proficiency required is high, and implicitly claims that there are important decisions made whilst representatives due to the lack of other languages than English remain partly or wholly in the dark as to what is actually being decided. This could be said to pose a democratic problem.

However, according to my informants foreign language competence is taken care of to one degree or other in the directorates, and several mentioned that they have colleagues who use languages such as French, German and Spanish in their work. Tasks involving the need for these languages tend to be divided between the members of staff who have this competence. This was emphasised by several respondents, particularly in Directorates B and C. According to my respondents, Directorate A appeared to be using more external help dealing with foreign languages compared to B and C, according to my respondents. This appears to function well in work performed in Norway, in cases followed up by the directorates either orally or in writing. The more challenging and unpredictable situations where this appears not to be as easy are the international meetings and conferences attended abroad, particularly expressed as problematic according to the respondents in Directorate A.

As noted, several of my informants expressed that they felt they would have benefited from being proficient in a foreign language, seeing as they believe English is not always enough to be able to communicate in the forums they attend. Some take specific measures in order to avoid linguistic humiliation:

> I make sure I do not end up in situations where I fall short concerning language issues. I do not put myself in situations where there are speeches made in German or French. I would of course like to have mastered French, because it is an important diplomatic language and therefore useful to know. I have been in several situations in which I wished I could speak both French and German (Elisabeth).

Many of the respondents expressed a clear desire to learn more languages or improve the ones they do know during the interviews. This desire was explained both from the point of view that it would benefit them professionally and a motivation triggered by a more personal interest. The desire to improve their language competence came across in the interviews with several of the respondents:

> I have always wanted to learn more French, and now I have decided to sign up for a French course, even though I might not be able to use it in my work for the time being. I want to do it because I find it important (Trude).

> Already during my first stay in Africa I went on a course to learn the local language, one of two main languages in the country. I found it very difficult. I went on courses in several colleges in the capital, because I needed to use it in the rural areas. People spoke bad English, especially the elderly and those who had little education. These days I feel I can understand quite a bit, but I cannot express myself (Trude).

> In one country I managed to learn a bit more of the local language than I had achieved during my first stay in another African country. In the end I made myself understood in restaurants and in shops, but this is ten years ago, and all gone now (Eli).

As can be observed from Trude and Eli's points of view, they represent a directorate dealing with a field in which a great variety of languages are used, and this appears to make their challenge somewhat different to that of the other directorates.

Section summary

To sum up, it can be noted that many of the respondents mention that they would have liked to be able to master a foreign language in addition to English. French is the language mentioned by most of my respondents as one which is particularly important to master in order to achieve influence in international work. Its position in the diplomatic field as well as being one of the official UN and EU languages are perhaps the main reasons the respondents see its value so strongly. It is also interesting to see which strategies are being applied when professionals do not wish to feel out of place. Simply avoiding situations where one could end up not understanding the language is perhaps comfortable to the individual, but it might not necessarily benefit the job one is appointed to do.

In the following chapter I will be discussing the findings I made in the interviews that I have accounted for in this chapter. I will attempt to draw lines from these findings to research performed on the issue and look at English in education, the construction of curricula as well as in the professional area.

5 Discussion

In this chapter I will briefly sum up my findings, before I comment on the validity of this survey. Then I will address the pecking order of languages that is present in international forums in which my respondents take part. Next, I discuss some of the facets of multicultural and institutional discourse. Moreover, I briefly touch upon the situation for other foreign languages than English, although it falls outside the scope of this thesis. Last, I go on to discuss the implications my results could have on the directorates, educational authorities and schools with regard to language awareness and the improvement of English skills.

5.1 Summary of my findings

The first of my research questions was:

- How and when do professionals in the directorates use English?

The respondents I interviewed all use English in their work, and each respondent stated that s/he speaks, reads and writes English on a regular basis. They stress that conferences and meetings are the major arenas where English is used, mainly in order to present material, take part in discussions and group work. In Directorates A and C these oral contexts appear to be the situations they find the most important. However, the interviewees from Directorate B, to a larger extent than their colleagues in A and C, emphasise that they use written English on an everyday basis to document processes and agreements.

All three directorates I visited can be said to be involved in extensive international contacts with governments and organisations abroad, more specifically important international organisations such as the EU and UN. Given the nature of these organisations the use of English will range from small-talk during breaks to negotiating internationally binding agreements. Consequently, I wanted to find out about their levels of confidence when using English.

- In which situations do they find themselves more or less confident?

To begin with, the overall impression of the respondents' level of confidence was that they claimed to manage well within the contexts they use English. It is important to note, however, that after a while many appeared to recall less positive experiences which they shared with me. These were both situations in which they themselves had suffered language problems, and incidents they had witnessed where others had failed to communicate in English.

The most shocking message that came across was incidents of obvious linguistic power-play

initiated by native English-speakers in EU and UN related forums. Several of my respondents told such stories, in which they themselves or colleagues had been ridiculed and outmanoeuvred by native speakers or representatives who had no intention in taking their arguments and reasoning seriously. In addition, the issue of culture as part of language communication was brought forward by several of the respondents. Indeed, this cultural aspect seems to be part of the reason why Norwegian representatives are ridiculed – they appear to be too straightforward and less tactical than their counterparts. While they think that presenting one's views is only necessary at the beginning of the speech, this is something that requires repetition and sophisticated technique, something my respondents see lacking in themselves and others. Furthermore, the enormous scope and variety in international contacts and its variations, ranging from small-talk to highly advanced negotiations, explain why they sometimes feel ill-prepared and insecure.

The next question was:

- What do they see as the reasons for this sense of or lack of confidence?

As mentioned above, some of the confidence-killers in international meetings and conferences are the native English-speakers who apparently take over the meetings and use the insecurity of others to further secure their own interests. Furthermore, while the respondents may be prepared for discussions where the arguments are pre-planned, when subjects and discussions occur spontaneously they feel unprepared and insecure. Again, another issue is the cultural one, in which Norwegians still seem to have a few things to learn, according to some of my respondents. This brings us to the next research question:

- If there are shortcomings felt by the respondents, are there ways these can be improved?

With the points made above in mind, it seems fitting to think wider in terms of language competence in the directorates. As stated earlier, the respondents all felt that they managed rather well in English in most situations, however, the comments made throughout the interviews indicate that situations occur in international cooperation and negotiations where poor language proficiency is clearly detrimental to Norwegian interests.

Next, according to my respondents, cultural competence appears to be an ignored area of the language field in the directorates. This is surprising, seeing as culture is such a vital part of communication and because the directorates in question deal with various cultures in their international work and therefore must acknowledge this aspect at some level or other (certainly many of my respondents do).

With regard to specific English used in narrow fields of work many of my respondents represent, there were several comments made. Particularly interesting was the one suggesting

official glossaries of terms used – in order to avoid confusion and misunderstandings in both written and oral contexts.

Overall, the respondents were positive to further training and welcomed courses in English that will hopefully enable them to use the language in a more precise and correct manner. The main point many of the respondents stressed was that the training would have to meet their level and be relevant to their area of work.

5.2 Validity

The main aim of this thesis was to examine to which degree my qualitative approach to the use of English in the directorates, in addition to elaborating upon, would confirm or contradict Hellekjær's study *Language power or powerlessness: The use of and need for foreign languages in Norwegian government* (Hellekjær 2010). Hellekjær found that there was a shortage of staff with a really good proficiency level of English, even though their general level of education was very high (Hellekjær 2010: 37). This coincides with my findings in the way that my respondents have equally high levels of education, yet many of them report that they face work situations using English where they do not feel confident.

Hellekjær's survey was, as mentioned earlier, a quantitative study comprising 846 respondents (Hellekjær 2010: 18), and the area of work as well as educational level in his survey and mine are quite similar. In my opinion, the fact that our results coincide to the degree they do strengthens the validity of both surveys. The answers given regarding the use of specific and advanced English were quite similar, showing that the respondents perceived many colleagues as unable to distinguish between advanced and basic English. In addition, they themselves felt the drawback of being unable to apply the use of advanced, or field specific English, in various contexts in order to achieve the desired results (Hellekjær 2010: 26-28). The internal validity of my survey is secured, I believe, by my attention to accuracy and correctness in the interview process as well as during the analysis (Robson 2002: 170). Moreover, as I have expressed already, the fact that my findings coincide to such a great degree with Hellekjær's (Hellekjær 2010), further strengthen the transferability of both our studies. "Here the data gained from a particular study provide theoretical insights which possess a sufficient degree of generality or universality to allow their projection to other contexts or situations" (Robson 2002: 177). The answers given by Hellekjær's respondents as well as mine imply that we could expect similar answers from similar groups of respondents in corresponding situations (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 265). My survey provides

richer and more detailed information than a quantitative survey can possibly present, therefore it expands the picture of the situation of English in the public sector, as far as I can see.

Furthermore, other studies that support my findings have been carried out, but largely in private businesses. Among others, the results reported in Verstraete-Hansen's report *Hvad skal vi med sprog?* (Verstraete-Hansen 2008) strengthen the validity of my survey in the respect that her respondents also identify similar problems to my respondents in communication in English. Verstraete-Hansen's report reveals that language competence is seen as a bonus skill that the employer brings in addition to his or her professional qualifications, rather than essential competence needed for the job (Verstraete-Hansen 2008: 43). This concern is also reported in Lie & Skjoldmo's survey that was carried out in businesses in the Bergen area in 1982 (Lie & Skjoldmo 1982: 28). Finally, another survey I relate my findings to is Hellum and Dypedahl's study *Business communication and cultural awareness in Norwegian companies,* carried out in Østfold county (Hellum & Dypedahl 1998).

All these surveys underline the importance of good language skills in professional contexts, however, they also reveal that companies rarely apply any strategies in order to improve language skills and attract staff who are particularly qualified in languages. Furthermore, the close bond between culture and language is expressed as a challenge by respondents in both Hellekjær's and my study, and this cultural awareness is something the researchers stress as particularly important in language courses for their students at Østfold College (Hellum & Dypedahl 1998:25, 27-29). Still, all the corresponding findings taken into consideration, my survey is a small scale qualitative survey, and the validity is thereby limited.

To sum up, although my survey is a small-scale qualitative survey, its validity is secured by the similarities in the results shared by Hellekjær's large-scale survey (Hellekjær 2010), that I have followed up and expanded upon. Furthermore, the surveys referred to above share results that indicate that both private and public sector face language challenges – both in the area of recruiting proficient staff and offering appropriate courses. They also stress the fact that culture and language is often not acknowledged as inseparable partners in communication. These findings all indicate that the results I am left with may be transferable to similar professional settings to the directorates.

5.3 The pecking order of languages

Although I emphasise in the results chapter that my survey has limited validity due to its small scale, all the similar findings mentioned above indicate that professional environments could benefit greatly if action was taken to ensure language quality in private businesses and public

administration alike. As underlined earlier, one of the most salient issues that I have discovered in this survey is the linguistic power play done by native speakers, and the sense of linguistic inferiority that many of my respondents report having experienced or witnessed in international EU and UN forums. The statements made by my respondents indicate that delegations travel to Europe in order to discuss and negotiate Norwegian interests, but that sometimes the representatives are unable to do so in a satisfactory manner, either because they do not dare to speak at all, or because they are made to seem ignorant by native speakers using language as a means of domination. To the degree that this is true, it reveals that Norwegian delegates need to improve their competence in English in order to be able to succeed in international relations. Acquiring and being able to use linguistic capital is a vital weapon in order to combat power play in the situations mentioned. Robert Phillipson describes linguistic capital as follows:

> Languages are a key constituent of social and cultural policies, and contribute in shaping the world. Linguistic capital is a significant form of cultural capital. Some forms of linguistic capital, privileged languages or forms of language are more easily convertible into material resources and influence than others (Phillipson 2003: 145).

Phillipson argues that privileged languages (here English) facilitate advantages in various ways, and in this case it is political influence. Somebody who is fluent in English can easily talk their way around the arguments of a foreign speaker who finds it challenging to debate outside their prepared script. Influence and power are privileges which can easily be unobtainable unless one has the aforementioned linguistic capital.

In order for directorate representatives to acknowledge that they might be the victims of such power plays, and next, to start a process of appropriate language training, awareness of the problem is vital. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, my impression is that the overall feeling of 'language confidence' was rather high at the start of the interviews, whereas the stories told during the interviews led me to believe that perhaps the episodes they have experienced or witnessed revealed a different truth. Therefore, an important obstacle to overcome seems to be the fact that language issues are not necessarily dealt with in the workplace or by the individual employee. The Danish researcher Knud Rahbek Schmidt expresses this as challenging, seeing as it is the issues the professionals are unaware of that can pose as the most serious ones (Schmidt as cited in Verstraete-Hansen 2008: 49). Consequently, there appears to be a need to raise the level of consciousness among language users regarding aspects such as culture and language power, in order for it to be addressed in work places.

5.3.1 Power and cultural aspects of communication

To return to language as a means of dominance, Phillipson characterises the use of language domination as a pecking order based on language background: "In many international encounters, meetings or conferences, there is a pecking order of languages, and little thought tends to be given to ensuring equality in communication" (Phillipson 2003: 66). Phillipson hits the nail on the head with regard to my impression: Many of my respondents had experienced and observed that relations are uneven due to the power of language. However, none of my respondents mentioned any measures taken to counteract this, or even that there was a debate in their organisation acknowledging this as a problem.

In the same way different language backgrounds lead to challenges in communication among professionals, thereby becoming an obstacle within multi-linguistic societies. In his book *Discourse and Power in a Multi-Lingual World,* Adrian Blackledge comments on the issue of power in multi-linguistic societies:

> In the linguistic market-place power relations exist, which mean that all speakers do not start out equal. Rather, in multilingual societies some speakers are able to activate linguistic capital which enables them to gain access to domains which offer less tangible rewards in terms of economic and social mobility (Blackledge 2005: 207-208).

The power struggles described by Blackledge are of the kinds that appear within a multilingual society, i.e. a multicultural society, where the speaker of a minority language is discriminated against. My argument is, however, that this uneven distribution of power is also likely to be found in the professional contexts my informants find themselves in. They appear to be victims of power-play in some of the situations described. I have attempted to find more literature or research material published on the issue of the relation between power and language in institutionalised discourse, unfortunately I have not succeeded. Still, in the same way the native speakers in multilingual societies reap the benefits of their linguistic capital at the cost of the minority speakers, so do the native speakers of any language used as an a working language in large organisations such as the EU and the UN. Consequently, their linguistic advantage comes at the expense of the non-native speakers.

However, the challenge does not limit itself to native and non-native speakers. Another area of challenges is the use of English as a lingua franca. As Lisbeth Verstraete-Hansen writes in her report based on the attitudes of Danish businesses, *Hvad skal vi med sprog?* (What do we need languages for?):

> But equality does not come as a consequence of using English. There may, in part, be great differences in proficiency level among the speakers, in addition the common language code conceals the cultural differences, which eventually shine through, when for example a Dane and an Italian speak English. This is because both speak based on their respective language cultures and cultural experiences. Still, these differences will not immediately be detected at language level (my translation, Verstraete-Hansen 2008: 31).

Consequently, it is reasonable to imagine that misunderstandings in communication can occur at many different levels, both between native and non-native speakers as well as when it is used as a lingua franca among non-native speakers. As Verstraete-Hansen argues, the question of culture is an additional factor that cannot be neglected.

Interestingly, the cultural aspect of communication came up in several of the interviews, and my respondents claimed that this topic receives very little attention and thought in relation to their work. Undoubtedly, the cultural aspect adds to the challenge when representatives struggle in the linguistic field in meetings and conferences. Consequently, these cross-cultural settings become particularly challenging for some of the participants. Holger Limberg and Ronald Geluykens (2008) address this issue in *Institutional Discourse in Cross-Cultural Contexts*. They point out the danger of misunderstandings often seen in such communication:

> It goes without saying that there is lots of potential for miscommunication (in the broadest sense of the word) and misunderstandings, especially since such interactions often involve some form of interlanguage by at least one of the participants (Geluykens and Limberg in Geluykens and Kraft 2008: 246).

In the business world, the issue of cultural barriers standing in the way of business has been given some attention through research, among others in the survey *Effects on the European Union Economy of Shortages of Foreign Language Skills in Enterprise,* abbreviated to ELAN (Hagen, Davila-Philippon & Nordgren 2006). This report claims that companies in Scandinavia experience more problems with cultural barriers than other European companies, with Norway topping the statistics at "42% of the companies experiencing more than average difficulty with cultural barriers" (Hagen, Davila-Philippon & Nordgren 2006: 22). I cannot make any judgement on the basis of the present study as to whether or not we as a nation are worse off than others with regard to cultural awareness. However, the shortcomings have preoccupied researchers, among others Hellum and Dypedahl (1998: 27-28), who emphasise that courses in cultural awareness were of great benefits to both private and public organisations.

In addition to the barriers culture presents, the nature of international work has another important facet which must be adhered to in order to succeed. The term *institutional discourse* is defined as discourse involving one or more participants representing a formal organisation where power is involved (Geluykens and Limberg in Geluykens and Kraft 2008: 247). The respondents who kindly supplied me with information about their use of English take part in institutionalised discourse, in which they represent official Norwegian interests. They do so either by contributing to progress and development internationally, or by fronting Norway's specific political interests. To do so they use English, often in narrow topic fields:

> Institutional discourse is also often different from ordinary discourse also with regard to specific institution-specific lexical choices. Many professions have specialized jargons, which are often opaque or inaccessible to outsiders of that profession (Geluykens and Kraft in Geluykens and Kraft 2008: 9).

To many of my respondents this was the main problem. They work in specialised fields using specialised language, which is seen as challenging to translate into English and use with ease and confidence. Moreover, this specialised English is needed in order to gain influence internationally. As I have attempted to explain with references to research in this field, my respondents at times felt that important decisions were made in international forums without their delegations being allowed influence. This could be due to either language barriers or shortcomings alone, or to additional cultural barriers standing in the way of the desired results.

5.3.2 Other foreign languages

Although the focus of this thesis is the use of English, it is appropriate to discuss some of the findings I did with regard to other foreign languages, seeing as this was one of my initial areas of interest. It also involves English as a "replacement language" when it is used when another language would be more useful or appropriate. As mentioned earlier, very few of my respondents use other foreign languages than English, however, the interviews showed that many had experienced the need to know another language. For instance, in an example that was also mentioned above, Truls shares examples of episodes that occur in EU contexts where he benefits from his language skills:

> I have been sitting in meetings (in the EU Commission) at the back of the hall when they have made important decisions. With my knowledge of French, German and English I have understood what has been going on, and have been able to approach the Danish representative, who had not understood, to explain and pinpoint what was going on, and then he or she could interrupt and follow up on the issue.

This statement clearly pinpoints one of the serious implications a lack of language competence can have. According to Truls, representatives in high-profiled international meetings often fail to function as their nation's spokespeople – simply because they do not master the languages spoken in the meetings. Few voices in Norway have raised the debate regarding Norwegians' language skills and the part they play in international relations. An exception is Lars Kolbeinstveit, representing the think-tank Civita:

> If Norway is to have the ability to influence political decisions in the EU – which in turn influence Norwegian politics – we are dependent on more people with competence in other European languages than English. [..] Since Norway signed the EEA agreement, a significant number of EU directives have been introduced which to a greater or lesser degree influence the lives of Norwegians[8] (my translation).

Truls exemplifies Kolbeinstveit's concerns (Kolbeinstveit 2010, see footnote for reference) regarding language competence and the lack of such in our contact with the EU. This also supports Professor Matlary's view (Matlary in Aftenposten 02.03.10) on the shortcomings of language competence among Norwegians, which I referred to in the introduction. Together these statements suggest that measures should be taken in order to improve the use of English and other foreign languages in the public and private sector.

5.4 Implications

5.4.1 For the directorates

A measure which can be taken in order to ensure quality in the use of English and foreign languages in the Norwegian state directorates, is focusing on language skills as part of existing skills plans. This does not seem to be a current practice, according to my interviewees. Moreover, in the same way private businesses often have no formal language strategies (Gundersen 2009: 80) the same is the case for the directorates. Indeed, it is rather surprising that these directorates, constantly dealing with international contacts, do not include language competence in their skills plans.

Another important area stressed by several of my respondents when assessing the use of English in their work, was *vocabulary*, more precisely the field vocabulary required to

8 "Mer fremmedspråk i skolen" http://www.civita.no/tema/utdanning-skole/mer-fremmedsprak-i-skolen-1196 (Accessed 30.07.10)

communicate with other professionals in any given area. Even within their own organisations some meet challenges due to the very specific terminology used in the different departments. Concerning the more general need for an advanced vocabulary, Tveit (1997) has performed some important groundwork. He conducted a survey focusing on language skills in private businesses. I believe that a lot of factors applying to the private sector he identified are relevant for the public sector as well, particularly Tveit's focus on vocabulary:

> Attaining a wide enough vocabulary in order to be able to express oneself with ease in a foreign language is a meticulous process. There is a great challenge for our educational institutions in providing the language courses with content and develop a methodology adapted to the society in which we live" (Tveit 1997: 33).

As much as vocabulary needs specific attention, there is a need for general improvement of language skills. In addition to ensure the staff's language competence through developing and carrying out skills plans, this should also be considered in the hiring process of new staff. Sadly this appears to be overlooked to a great degree, and language skills are expected to materialise without any conscious effort on the part of the employer. As has been reported in surveys from businesses in Norway, very little effort is made to hire staff with language competence – it appears to be expected as an implicit skill (Hellekjær 2007, Lie & Skjoldmo 1982).

This means that the introduction of language skills plans could increase the awareness of language skills as equal to other professional skills, and open up for staff with higher education involving languages. Improvements in language skills in the directorates will most likely only take place after carefully planned measures are implemented.

5.4.2 Implications for school

In the same way businesses and public administration must focus on English skills in their staff if improvements are to be made, so must the education system, in order to advance the pupils' proficiency level in English. It is now taught in Norway during all the ten years of compulsory primary and secondary school, and in that respect the continuous learning process provides great opportunities for development in English. However, even though Norwegians manage well internationally in informal communication involving English, there seems to be an unexploited potential in our education system before an advanced proficiency level is reached in the Norwegian student population (Faye-Schøll 2009; Hellekjær 2005; Sparboe 2008). One reason the problem persists, is that a lot of teachers in primary school teach English without any form of higher education in the subject – since it is not a compulsory subject in the teacher education. Even in secondary school the initiative to ensure that teachers who teach any given subject should have a

minimum of 30 study points (equivalent to 6 months full time education) has yet not been fully implemented.

Consequently, there are still a substantial number of pupils who learn English from teachers with no more education in the subject themselves than upper secondary school. This is hardly the best point of departure if our ambition is to be proficient users of English in specialised professional settings. Therefore, if the educational reform of LK06 is to contribute to increased competence in languages among pupils and students, and avoid English and foreign languages being overshadowed by the current focus on Mathematics and Natural Sciences, measures should primarily be taken to raise the standard of teaching. This should start with teacher education. English should be compulsory in the education of primary and secondary school teachers; consequently, teachers should not be allowed to teach English without being qualified. The main reason for this demand, is that the better quality teaching the pupils receive in primary and secondary school, the better they are prepared for upper secondary school – where teachers are required to have a minimum of 60 study points in any subject to be allowed to teach it. In other words, if the foundation is laid at an early stage, the students can be followed up with more advanced and specific English in upper secondary school, ensuring a higher proficiency level.

Improving competence of teachers in English would most likely secure a higher level of proficiency as the students enter upper secondary school. Still, in Norway a diploma from upper secondary school qualifying graduates to apply for higher education can be obtained both through general study courses and vocational courses (with a third year of general subjects). This means that although we can debate whether or not English in upper secondary school should be different for the two groups of students, the fact of the matter is that most of those who enrol into university only have the compulsory Vg1 course in English (in vocational courses it is taken over two years, with the same number of lessons in total).

This brings me to an important question that needs to be addressed by the Norwegian educational authorities: Does one year of English in upper secondary school provide enough of a basis for students to be able to study in English at university? Clearly it would be beneficial to upper secondary students to learn more general English or subject-specific English in upper secondary school, either as CLIL-based teaching[9] or in separate courses. Another option would be to construct English courses adapted to either the Natural Sciences or the Economics and Social Sciences, as an attempt to strengthen the subject-specific English these students are likely to meet in higher education. There also needs to be a greater emphasis on teaching general English, including

[9] http://fremmedspråksenteret.no/index.php?ID=10111 (Accessed 23.02.11)

strategies in reading (Hellekjær 2005; Faye-Schøll 2009) and writing (Sparboe 2008). This would also help prepare students for the subject-specific English so many of them will find beneficiary for reading and writing as students at university, as well as for work in for instance the directorates.

Furthermore, the English curriculum plays a major part in what we teach and how we teach it, and to fully exploit the benefit of having a national curriculum, one should perhaps discuss whether national criteria for evaluation and work processes would be an asset to the quality of teaching. This could involve more specific guidelines for the assessment of oral and written work, something many teachers have called for over the years. Instead, guidelines from the authorities have led to the schools spending a great deal of time and effort on developing local syllabi since the LK06 was introduced.

Moreover, as I pointed out earlier in this thesis, there is no tradition in Norway for carrying out needs analyses prior to developing new curricula. This is approached differently in other parts of the world, and can be studied in literature on the subject, in which the context, student needs, goals and assessment are all analysed before designing the curriculum of a given course (Nation & Macallister 2010: 136-140). Indeed, many of the processes described by Nation and Macallister in *Language Curriculum Design* (Nation & Macallister 2010) involve needs analyses-based, course-specific curriculum design.

5.4.3 Higher education

Next, in higher education subject-specific English courses should be offered as part of the degrees, to ensure that the students do not simply fumble in the dark until they eventually crack the code of the often specialised language used in narrow topic fields. As several of my respondents put it; the first year as a student was spent trying to understand the terminology and getting to grips with what their courses involved. This sense of frustration communicated to me by my respondents could to a large degree be avoided if English was an included part of the degree. Moreover, a strengthening of existing exchange programmes, will allow students to learn both subject-specific language and general language during their stay abroad.

5.4.4 Cultural implications

As stated earlier in this thesis, there is more to language than the words spoken or written. A vital part of communication between human beings revolves around cultural codes and unwritten rules. Not surprisingly, the previously referred to survey conducted by Bjørg Hellum and Magne Dypedahl for Høgskolen i Østfold in 1998 called *Business Communication and Cultural Awareness*

in Norwegian Companies, found that cultural awareness as an aspect of communication was in need of improvement: "It is evident that many of the respondents look upon communication simply as a matter of putting the right words together. This is partly a result of the way languages are taught in secondary school and elsewhere" (Hellum & Dypedahl 1998: 27-28). Even though this report is 13 years old, it is most likely that there is still need for improvement of cultural awareness as well as the purely linguistic aspect of communication. Similar findings were reported in the ELAN survey (Hagen, Davila-Philippon, & Nordgren 2006: 22-23). This aspect was commented on by several of my respondents, who found that it was a topic often ignored in communication. Stine, one of my respondents, put it like this:

> One thing is the language, another is the Norwegian culture, which crashes so totally. We are so impolite, straightforward and coarse, and that is an additional aspect to the language issue. Being less Norwegian is as great a challenge as speaking English.

Drastic measures are called for from Stine's point of view – *being less Norwegian* – is that what we should strive for in cross-cultural communication? Eradicating one's culture and background is perhaps taking it slightly too far, nevertheless, looking at the report by Hellum and Dypedahl, they reveal having similar prejudices towards their own students in Høgskolen i Østfold:

> Our courses in intercultural communication are based on the assumption that many Norwegians have a tendency to have an inflated self-image, or a "superiority complex". Combined with ethnocentrism, there is no doubt that false presuppositions about how we are perceived will represent potential stumbling blocks in cross-cultural communication (Hellum & Dypedahl 1998: 25)

To the question: "What impression do you think people from other cultures have of Norwegians in a business context?" Hellum and Dypedahl reveal that 81% of the respondents answered **generally positive** and 8% **very positive (**Hellum and Dypedahl 1998: 25). The researchers do not state that their respondents have a superiority complex, however, we could ask ourselves what the numbers would be had the questions been presented to the foreign business partners of the informants in question.

The findings in Hellum and Dypedahls survey and the ELAN survey (Hagen et al. 2006) along with my respondents' expressed views (exemplified by Stine above) indicate that there is a job to be done not only in the linguistics area, but also in the cultural one. There is reason to believe that teaching culture awareness relevant to foreign languages will be a positive contribution to closing business deals internationally (Hellekjær 2007), as well as maintaining and improving international relations diplomatically and politically. Consequently, I strongly suggest that cultural

awareness should be included in the teaching of English at all levels. I believe that this is currently done to a certain degree, however, statements made by my respondents and research referred to above indicate that this is an area still in need of further focus.

To sum up, many measures should be taken in order to raise the competence level of English in the Norwegian population. Perhaps the most important, and the best place to start, would be to counteract the sense of complacency in the population concerning the general level of English proficiency – as long as we somehow make ourselves understood anything goes. This is something that needs to be addressed in education, in the media and in the workplace. Second, we need a greater focus on the general English in primary and lower secondary school. Finally, the professional environments – businesses and public sector alike, need to acknowledge that proficiency in languages represents important skills that deserve to be addressed and nurtured in skills plans and in hiring processes.

6 Conclusion

In the process of this survey, through the results I have reported, the research I have read and the debates I have followed, there is one aspect of this issue that appears particularly important – English skills need to be raised to a higher level of importance. The fact that Norwegians in general speak English to the extent that they can make themselves understood and can hold an informal conversation, does not imply that we exploit our linguistic potential. Throughout Norwegian society there is a sense of complacency with regard to English competence – we seem to manage well enough, and settle for that. However, users of English in work contexts report that there are complications, there is linguistic power-play and opportunities are missed because of poor English proficiency. Consequently, I claim that English competence needs to be elevated to a more prominent position as far as skills assessment and development goes. English needs to be addressed differently and more consciously in school, in higher education and in the workplace, simply because we need it in so many contexts.

A high level of English proficiency has become increasingly important in international work, co-operation and development for Norwegian authorities over the last decades, as my respondents point out, particularly referring to the EEA agreement. The influence we gain and the results we achieve internationally largely depend on the communication skills of those who are involved in this work, thus, English competence becomes vital. It is undoubtedly an asset to the organisation when professionals who are sent out on international assignments to negotiate or argue Norway's case are proficient in English. The proficiency we are after can only be achieved by hard work and conscious planning – it is not an inborn, implicit skill.

Consequently, in order to nurture and develop the basic English skills held by most Norwegians and transform these into advanced skills that will benefit them as individuals in education, social contexts and work, not to mention safeguard Norwegian public and business interests, conscious measures need to be taken. Curriculum development and specific demanding goals, as seen in the LK06 from primary school onwards, is of little use if it is not followed up by qualified teachers in the classrooms. Likewise, public and private employers cannot somehow expect to recruit and keep staff who are competent English users as long as this need is not expressed explicitly. Consequently, English skills need to be specified in recruitment plans and skills plans in public administration and private businesses. As long as private businesses and public sector alike do not explicitly demand employees highly qualified in languages, nothing much seems to happen. I suspect that if high-profile employers were to specify their needs and demand highly qualified professionals in English and other foreign languages, something might just start to

develop on the political arena as well. Moreover, political interest and engagement in language issues could, in ways of improved teacher education, elevation of teacher status, negotiation of salary levels among other measures, contribute to improving the quality of English teaching in Norwegian schools.

6.1 Further research

English plays an increasingly important part at work for a number of professionals in Norway. Sadly, other foreign languages have not yet experienced the same positive development. Several of my respondents reported that they find themselves in work situations where they would have benefited from knowing another foreign language, and some even deliberately shun such situations in order to avoid feeling inadequate. With this in mind, and considering that EU and UN forums often involve other languages such as French and German, it would be very interesting to see research carried out in the directorates with explicit focus on the use of and need for other foreign languages than English. An idea would be to conduct surveys in each directorate with the aim to assess the needs at department level and the different levels of positions within each department. A specific survey could determine which situations English and other foreign languages are used, what specific challenges they face and what expressed measures they call for. This could form a basis for skills plans and courses at section, department or group level.

Furthermore, it would be useful to see if the findings I have made are matched or contradicted if other public domains, such as the state inspectorates, are surveyed. A similar qualitative survey could also be carried out in private businesses, in order to see what the situation for languages is like in that area. In widening the scope to include the areas mentioned above we would see an increased focus on English and other foreign languages used professionally. We would obtain more data, and hopefully this could contribute to the authorities planning and carrying out measures that in the long run will raise the competence level of English and foreign languages in the population in general, as well as benefiting the professional use of languages.

6.2 What needs to happen now?

In an increasingly globalised world, Norwegian professionals at all levels need to master English (and sometimes other languages) to a standard that enables them to discuss, make public speeches, small talk during breaks, read and perhaps write reports. They need to be able to differentiate between various degrees of formality, as well as be aware of cultural differences in communication and negotiations. In order for this to be a feasible goal, the language education

needs to address the language demands Norwegians are faced with in professional life. This, I believe, is where the primary action needs to take place in order to turn the negative trends around.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, I hold the authorities largely responsible for the complacency seen in the Norwegian society with regard to English and foreign language competence. Consequently, if the issue is addressed at national political and administrative level, acknowledging the political and commercial consequences of poor English proficiency, it will open up for discussions and further awareness in other forums, such as educational authorities and private and public professional arenas. I believe this is a good place to start in order to prepare the ground for educational measures. Moreover, I believe that a critical view of English skills taken by the authorities at political and administrative level will spread to private businesses, to the press and thus to the general public. Along with measures in education and in-house business training, this is essentially the way forward if Norwegians are to be freed from their feeling of complacency; we need to know that language matters and that we can reach further in communication professionally and personally if we work on our own skills continuously.

References

Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., & Delamont, S. (2003). *Key Themes in Qualitative Research*. Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

Blackledge, A. (2005). *Discourse and Power in a Multilingual World*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Bliesener, U. (2003). European Language Policy – Frustration and Hope. In: H. Ahrens (Ed.), E*uropäische Sprachenpolitik/European Language Policy* (pp.78). Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter.

Faye-Schøll, L. (2009). *Reading in upper secondary: What is reading, how is reading taught and what are the teachers' attitudes towards the teaching of reading?* Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo (mastergradsoppgave). The electronic version can be accessed here: http://www.duo.uio.no/publ/realfag/2009/92284/OppgavenxixDUOxmed.pdf

Geluykens, R. & Kraft, B. (2008). The Cross-Cultural Dimension of Institutional Discourse. In: R. Geluykens & B. Kraft (Eds.), *Institutional Discourse in Cross-Cultural Contexts* (pp.9). München: Lincom Europa.

Geluykens, R. & Limberg, H. (2008). Spoken Academic Discourse: A Critical Review. In: R. Geluykens & B. Kraft (Eds.), *Institutional Discourse in Cross-Cultural Contexts* (pp. 246-247). München: Lincom Europa.

Gundersen, S.L. (2009). Language Management: in multinational companies. Bergen: SNF. The electronic version can be accessed here: http://bora.nhh.no/bitstream/2330/2596/1/R21_09.pdf

Hagen, S., Davila-Philippon, S., & Nordgren, B. (2006). *ELAN: effects on the European economy of shortages of foreign language skills in enterprise*. London: The UK National Centre for Languages (CiLT).

Hellekjær, G.O. (2005). *The acid test: Does upper secondary EFL instruction effectively prepare Norwegian students for the reading of English textbooks at colleges and universities.* Universitetet i Oslo (doktorgradsoppgave). Oslo: Unipub.

Hellekjær, G.O. (2007). *Fremmedspråk i norsk næringsliv – engelsk er ikke nok!* (Fokus på språk, 3). Halden: Fremmedspråksenteret.

Hellekjær, G.O. (2010). *Language power or powerlessness: The use of and need for foreign languages in Norwegian government (Språkmakt og avmakt: Bruk av og behov for bruk av fremmedspråk i statsforvaltningen).* (Fokus på språk, 25). Halden: Fremmedspråksenteret.

Hellum, B. & Dypedahl, M. (1998). *Business communication and cultural awareness in Norwegian companies*. Halden: Østfold distriktshøgskole.

Jasso-Aguilar, R. (2005). Sources, methods and triangulation in needs analysis: A critical perspective in a case study of Waikiki hotel maids. In: M. Long (Ed.), *Second Language Needs Analysis* (pp.128,149). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *Det kvalitative forskningsintervju* (2nd ed.). Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk.

Kvam, S. & Schewe, T. (1984). *Tyskkunnskaper i norsk næringsliv: En analyse av behov og etterspørsel*. Halden: Østfold distriktshøgskole.

Lett, J. (2005). Foreign language needs assessment in the US military. In: M. Long (Ed.), *Second Language Needs Analysis* (pp.110, 122). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lever, P. (2003). The future of Europe: Will We All Speak English? In: H. Ahrens (Ed.), *Europäische Sprachenpolitik/European Language Policy* (pp.104-105, 107). Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter.

Lie, U. & Skjolmo, S. (1982). *Behovet for fremmedspråkkompetanse i næringslivet*. Bergen: Universitetet i Bergen/Hordaland lektorlag (pp.30, 28).

Long, M. (2005). Methodological issues in learner needs analysis. In: M. Long (Ed.), *Second Language Needs Analysis* (pp.2-3, 5, 20, 32, 35). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Matlary, J.H. (2010). Kleve-engelsk. In: Aftenposten, 02.03.10

Nation, I.S.P. & Macalister, J. (2010). *Language Curriculum Design*. New York: Routledge.

Norges Handelshøyskole (1973). *Siviløkonomers bruk av fremmedspråk*. Bergen: Norges Handelshøyskole.

Phillipson, R. (2003). *English-Only Europe? Challenging Language Policy*. London: Routledge (pp.112-115, 145, 66).

Robinson, P. (1980). *ESP (English for Specific Purposes): The present position*. Oxford: Pergamon (pp.6, 29-30).

Robson, C. (2002). *Real World Research* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing (pp.455, 276, 290, 170, 177).

Sparboe, M.L.S. (2008). *English academic writing in Norwegian upper secondary school: does upper secondary school EFL instruction effectively help pupils develop academic writing skills?* Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo (mastergradsoppgave). The electronic version can be accessed here: http://www.duo.uio.no/publ/realfag/2008/87537/EndeligxMaster.pdf

Thowsen, I. (2009). But, but, it's not only only. In: Adresseavisa, 11.04.09

Tudor, I. (1997). LSP or Language Education? In: G. Brown & R. Howard (Eds.), *Teacher Education for Languages for Specific Purposes* (pp.91). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Tveit, J.E. (1997). Næringslivets behov for språkkompetanse. In: *Språk og språkundervisning*, 4 (pp.33).

Verstraete-Hansen, L. (2008). *Hvad skal vi med sprog?* Copenhagen: Copenhagen Business School.

West, R. (1997). Needs Analysis: State of the art. In: G. Brown & R. Howard (Eds.), *Teacher Education for Language for Specific Purposes* (pp.68-69, 72-73). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Online references:

Statistics on the number of students in upper secondary school taking language subjects, supplied by The Directorate of Education and Training:

http://skoleporten.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/rapportvisning.aspx?enhetsid=00&vurderingsomrade=fed86d60-df13-45c8-a544-457b84fc8216&underomrade=777215a2-eef6-4245-951d-c2632fdd384e&skoletype=1 (Accessed 26.04.11)

The Common European Framework:
http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/Framework_EN.pdf (Accessed 01.08.10)

The United Nations' language policies: http://www.un.org/en/aboutun/languages.shtml (Accessed 18.04.11)

Explanation of the functions of the directorates:

http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/fad/dok/veiledninger_og_brosjyrer/1993/direktoratsboka/2.html?id=464832 (Accessed 18.04.11)

Definition of 'gap analysis':

http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/gap-analysis.html (Accessed 20.04.11)

Språk åpner dører. Strategic plan developed by the Ministry of Education. Revised version from 2007 available at Fremmedspråksenteret's website:

http://www.hiof.no/neted/upload/attachment/site/group55/UDIR_SprakApnerDorer_07nett.pdf (Accessed 30.07.10)

"Mer fremmedspråk i skolen":

http://www.civita.no/tema/utdanning-skole/mer-fremmedsprak-i-skolen-1196

(Accessed 30.07.10)

CLIL – Content & Language Integrated learning:

http://fremmedspråksenteret.no/index.php?ID=10111 (Accessed 23.02.11)

Appendix 1

Table 1: Description of the respondents (detailed)

Respondents and education	**Job title and experience**	**Examples of work tasks in English**
Mads (Directorate A) 56 Master's degree in Technology (Technical Physics), 1 year of Environmental Studies (all in Norway) Upper sec. School: Natural Sciences, little English	Senior Adviser Worked in the directorate nine years	UN / EU-related forums. Meetings (participating in debates, presenting Norway's views) Conferences (presentations)
Ove (Directorate A) 48 Master's degree in Chemistry from Germany, PPU from Norway Upper sec. School: English all three years	Head of Section Worked in the directorate 15 years, in this job for five years (in charge of 15 members of staff)	Meetings in EU-related forums (participates in debates, presents Norway's views) Writes documents (regulations)
Frank (Directorate A) 33 Master's degree in Technology (Chemistry) from Norway Upper sec. School: Natural Sciences, little English	Adviser Worked in the directorate four years	Answers questions by mail and telephone Meetings in EU-related forums (participating in debates, presenting Norway's views)
Stine (Directorate A) 59 Cand.Real. (Nutrition, Plant Physiology) from Norway Upper sec. School: Natural Sciences, little English	Senior Adviser Worked in the directorate 24 years Lived and worked in Brussels one year (National Expert in the EU Commission)	Meetings in EU and UN forums (participating in debates, presenting Norway's views) Coordinates regulations (on all levels from national to global)
Frida (Directorate A) 55 Master's degree in Technology (Chemistry) Upper sec. School: Natural Sciences, little English	Senior Adviser Worked in the directorate 24 years Worked in Sweden briefly, used Norwegian as work language	E-mails, phone calls Seminars and conferences Meetings in EU forums Has given the occasional presentation in English
Anna (Directorate B) 43 Master's degree in Law (Norway), one	Senior Adviser	Dialogue with embassies

year of journalist college (Britain) Upper secondary school: English only in the first year	Worked in the directorate five years Worked in Kosovo two years, in an international English-speaking environment	E-mails, phone calls Nearly all written work is done in English (comments on contracts, formal letters)
Elisabeth (Directorate B) 56 One year of History in university, journalist apprenticeship one year (both in Norway) Upper secondary school: English only in the first year	Director Worked in the directorate three years (current position) responsible for 17 members of staff Worked as foreign correspondent for Norwegian media corporations in two American cities (a total of six years)	Phone calls Reads documents Leads debates, conferences and campaigns
Trude (Directorate B) 55 Cand.Polit. (Social Anthropology and Political Science) in Norway Three years of student field work and part paid position in Africa (late 1980s) using English and local language Upper secondary school: English all three years	Adviser Worked in the directorate one year (also worked here for a two-year period ten years ago) Worked four years in Africa (1991-95). Work language: English and local language (to a lesser degree)	Reviews documents Trips abroad (supervising/reviewing projects) Reads documents Writes documents Meetings in international forums
Eli (Directorate B) 64 Cand.Mag. (French, Political Science, Public Law) Upper secondary school: English all three years	Senior Adviser Worked in the directorate for 38 years Worked in A frica 1980-83 and 1998-2001, in two different countries. Work language English and local languages (to a lesser degree)	Reviews projects Hires consultants Meetings in international forums Writes documents Reads documents
Truls (Directorate C) 59 Cand.Polit. (in Norway) English/British Medieval History (in England) as part of the degree Upper secondary school: English all three years	Director Worked in the directorate four years	Gives lectures Leads discussion groups Attends conferences Reads documents Writes documents
Arne (Directorate C) 31 Bachelor's degree in Development Studies (in Norway). This included a	Chief Consultant	Meetings in UN forums and with other international organisations

six months study period in Cairo + six months field work in other African country. One year of International Politics and Security in a British university. Upper secondary school: English all three years	Worked in the directorate six months. Has previously worked for a 'think tank' in Britain for six months.	Study visits E-mails and phone calls Writes documents and formal letters
Stein (Directorate C) 41 Bachelor's degree in Economics and degree in Public Administration (both in Norway). Has further education in Public Administration. Upper sec school: Business and Administration English one year	Senior Adviser Worked in the directorate two years	Attends conferences International meetings Welcomes foreign delegations to Norway E-mails
Vilde (Directorate C) 57 Bachelor's degree in Physiotherapy Upper sec school: English all three years	Director Worked in the directorate seven years	Attends conferences Gives lectures International UN- related cooperation meetings Reads and writes documents

Appendix 2:

Semi-structured interview (English version)

Background and competence

1. What is your name?
2. What position are you in?
3. How long have you had this position?
4. What tasks do you perform?
5. What type of education have you got?
6. What type of education have you got in English (and possibly other foreign languages you use in your work)?
    - Upper secondary school (Vg1, Vg2, Vg3)
    - Higher education
    - Exchange/studies abroad
    - Work-related stays abroad
7. Do you have language competence through another first language or stays abroad?

Use of English and/or other foreign language

8. What languages (other than Norwegian) do you use at work?
    - If the respondent answers *only* English: jump to question 10.
    - If the respondent answers *one or more languages* apart from English: move on to question 9.
9. How often do you use (English) and other foreign languages?

- I ask these questions only if relevant based on earlier answers
- If the respondent answers one language: What do you do (in this language)?
- If the respondent answers several languages: ask about one language at a time to find out whether the language is used in different situations:
    - Different types of use (writing, reading, formal, informal use)
    - Reading documents, reading for keeping updated on field of work, writing texts, formal/informal use)

10. What do you do in English?

- Different situations the language is used in
- Different types of use (writing, reading, formal and informal use)
- Writing/reading documents (reading for keeping updated on field of work, writing texts, formal/informal use, etc.)

Specific situations – misunderstandings and successes

11. Can you tell me about some situations where you have used English and/or another foreign language?

    (here I ask relevant questions based on whether the respondents has explained that s/he uses one or more foreign languages apart from English)

12. What successes have you experienced in connection with the use of English?

- To the respondents who also use other languages: What successes have you experienced in connection with the use of? (here I ask about specific languages which the respondent has mentioned that s/he uses)

13. Have you been in situations where you have used English and/or other foreign languages and felt that you did not manage adequately?

14. Can you tell me about one or more situations like that?

15. Have you been in situations where you needed to use English or another foreign language, but hesitated to do so? In that case, what stopped you from using English or a foreign language in that particular situation?

Quality control/ course needs

16. Do you have routines for quality control of work that is performed in English or other foreign languages? (reviews, colleague who looks over report/PowerPoint, etc.)

17. To what degree does your employer facilitate for the acquisition of knowledge in languages (courses, further education)?

18. What needs do you see for courses/further education at your work?

    - If the respondent answers that s/he does not see any such needs, jump to question 20.

19. What can the directorate achieve by giving its staff access to courses/further education?

20. Do you have any general views regarding the use of foreign languages in your organisation? (potential of improvement, visions, etc.)

21. Do you have any ideas in order to achieve some of these things?

Miscellaneous

22. Is there anything you would like to add before we end the interview?

Thank you for your help!